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The Upanishads

Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna,
Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya
Shvetashvatara, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka

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Brihadaranyaka

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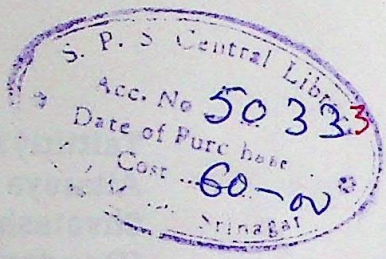

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INTRODUCTION

The word *Upanishad* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *sad*, which means to sit, and two prepositions, *upa* (under) and *ni* (at). The sense is thus of sitting for instruction at the feet of a teacher.

The *Upanishads* are sacred treatises, spiritual and philosophical in nature. Vedic literature is divided into two broad groups. The first is known as *karma kanda*, the section that deals with rituals and rites. This has the *samhitas*, that is, compilations of *mantras* or hymns. The four *samhitas* are the *Rig Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. The *mantras* require commentaries as explanations. These are the *brahmanas*. The *samhitas* and the *brahmanas* are together known as *karma kanda*.

The second section of Vedic literature is *jnana kanda*, the part that deals with knowledge. This segment is the spiritual and philosophical part and consists of the *aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*.

The earliest *Upanishads* were probably composed between the years 800 B.C. and 400 B.C. Over the years, the number of *Upanishads* increased. For example, the *Allah Upanishad* was composed as late

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as the sixteenth century, during the reign of Emperor Akbar. There is one particular text that is known as the *Muktika Upanishad*. This lists out the names of 108 different *Upanishads*. In addition, four more texts are available, so that the total number of texts in circulation is 112. But as mentioned, several of these *Upanishads* are of comparatively recent origin.

The major *Upanishads* are ten or eleven in number. This is based on the fact that Shankaracharya (800 A.D.) wrote his celebrated commentaries on ten of the *Upanishads*. These are the first ten *Upanishads* listed in the accompanying table.

Major Upanishads

Name of *Upanishad*	Associated *Veda*
1. *Isha*	*Shukla Yajur*
2. *Kena*	*Sama*
3. *Katha*	*Krishna Yajur*
4. *Prashna*	*Atharva*
5. *Mundaka*	*Atharva*
6. *Mandukya*	*Atharva*
7. *Taittiriya*	*Krishna Yajur*
8. *Aitareya*	*Rig*
9. *Shvetashvatara*	*Krishna Yajur*
10. *Chandogya*	*Sama*
11. *Brihadaranyaka*	*Shukla Yajur*

In addition, Shankaracharya may have written a commentary on the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, a

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commentary that is no longer available. If one includes this text as well, there are eleven major *Upanishads*. These are the ones we will translate. The other texts are minor *Upanishads*.

You will have noticed that, in the table, an associated *Veda* is mentioned with each *Upanishad*. The *samhita* part of any *Veda* had a *brahmana* associated with it. Subsequently, *aranyakas* and *Upanishads* also came to be associated with that particular *samhita*. Thus, each *Upanishad* is associated with one of the four *Vedas*. The *Yajur Veda* had two different schools, the *Shukla* (White) *Yajur Veda* and the *Krishna* (Black) *Yajur Veda*. The former is also known as the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*. Each of these two schools of the *Yajur Veda* had separate *Upanishads* associated with it. Moreover, the *Vedas* often had distinct recensions or schools. Thus, although both the *Prashna Upanishad* and the *Mundaka Upanishad* are associated with the *Atharva Veda*, the former belongs to the Pippalada recension of the *Atharva Veda* and the latter to the Saunaka recension.

The eleven major *Upanishads* listed above are fairly short. It is of course possible that the text that is now available does not constitute the entirety of the original *Upanishad*. This, for example, seems to have happened with the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Two *Upanishads* are however fairly long. These are the *Chandogya* and the *Brihadaranyaka*.

It is now impossible to establish the chronological order in which the *Upanishads* were

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composed. But the most likely order seems to be *Brihadaranyaka*, *Chandogya*, *Taittiriya*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Isha*, *Mundaka*, *Prashna*, *Mandukya*, *Shvetashvatara* and *Aitareya*.

The teachings of the *Upanishads*, together with that of the *Bhagavad Gita*, form the basis of Vedanta philosophy. But Vedanta itself is subject to many interpretations and there have been three major schools of Vedanta, following the teachings of Shankara (800 A.D.), Ramanuja (first half of 12th century) and Madhava (14th century). The major conceptions of the *Upanishads* are uniform. But they differ in details and therefore, alternative interpretations are possible. Since there were different authors at different points of time, it would be illogical to expect them to have a coherent philosophical system. The views of one sage did not necessarily agree with those of another. Does the supreme being possess qualities (*saguna*), or does he have no qualities (*nirguna*)? Is the external world real or unreal? Is the human soul an individual agent and finite? Or is it identical with the divine soul and therefore infinite? The *Upanishads* themselves give differing answers to these questions.

Let us now go on to what the *Upanishads* have to say. We will begin with the *Isha Upanishad*.

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THE ISHA UPANISHAD

(The *Isha Upanishad* is unique in two senses. It is a very short *Upanishad*, consisting of only eighteen *shlokas* or verses. It is also the only *Upanishad* that forms part of the *samhita* section of a *Veda*. The *Isha Upanishad* is the last chapter of the *Shukla Yajur Veda*. It is known as the *Isha Upanishad* because the first word of the text is *isha*, which means, by the supreme godhead. The motif of the *Upanishad* is, someone who knows the identity of the human soul with the divine soul is learned. In contrast, an individual who lacks this knowledge is ignorant. The text is composed entirely in verse.)

Every object in the universe is transient. And all such objects are encompassed by the supreme godhead. Give up all these transient objects and look to the eternal. Do not lust for the wealth of others. Wealth belongs to no one.

He who desires to live on this earth for a hundred years, pursues the path of action (*karma*). There is no other prescribed path for one who aspires for a long life. Deviation from this norm leads one to tread the path of sin.

The worlds where the demons (*asuras*) dwell, are shrouded in impenetrable darkness. Individuals who commit suicide are destined for those worlds after their deaths.

(The word suicide needs explanation, since it does not mean suicide in a literal sense. A person who does not follow the righteous path, effectively kills

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his soul (*atman*). This is tantamount to committing suicide, even though the individual may be physically alive.)

The divine soul is unique and immobile. It is swifter than the mind. The senses cannot attain it. The divine soul never moves. And yet, it can overtake all those who are swift. It is because the divine soul is present that the wind blows and spurs all beings to action.

The divine soul moves. And yet it does not move. It is far. And yet it is near. It is inside this universe. And yet it is outside the universe.

He who is truly learned sees the divine soul (*paramatman*) in all objects and all objects in the *paramatman*. Such a person rises above all fear and hatred.

(The word used for the divine soul in the verse is *atman*. But we have used the word *paramatman* to draw a distinction with the individual human soul or *atman*.)

He who realises the identity between all objects and the *paramatman* is truly learned. He knows no illusion or sorrow. Such sentiments become meaningless for him.

The divine soul is radiant and omnipresent. It has no form and cannot be harmed. It has no veins and is pure. It is not touched by sin and sees everything. It is the ruler of the mind. The *paramatman* is supreme, it created itself. The divine soul is always

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present. It is the *paramatman* who decreed the rules that the universe follows.

Those who follow only the path of action are immersed in the darkness of ignorance. Those who follow only the path of knowledge are immersed in an even greater darkness.

Our teachers have explained to us the benefits of action and knowledge. The fruits obtained through a path of action are distinct from the fruits obtained through a path of knowledge.

The truly learned person is one who knows that action and knowledge have to be pursued together. He performs prescribed actions and overcomes death. He attains knowledge and becomes immortal.

Those who only worship nature are immersed in impenetrable darkness. Those who only worship the *paramatman* are immersed in an even greater darkness.

Our teachers have explained to us the benefits that can be obtained by worshipping nature and the *paramatman*. The fruits obtained from worshipping nature are different from the fruits obtained by worshipping the *paramatman*.

He who is truly learned, knows that nature and the *paramatman* have to be worshipped in unison. The worship of the *paramatman* enables him to overcome death. And the worship of nature enables him to attain immortality.

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Truth lies hidden inside a golden vessel. O sun! You are the follower of the truth. Remove the lid so that I may realise the truth.

(The golden vessel seems to be a metaphor for material distractions.)

O Pusha! You are the one who treads alone. You are the one who controls us and you are the son of Prajapati. O sun! Restrain your rays so that your energy may not burn us. Through your blessings, I will get to look upon your pleasant visage. In your self is the *paramatman*. I will realise that I am one with the *paramatman*.

(Pusha is another name for the sun. Prajapati literally means the *pati* or lord of all *praja* or subjects in the universe.)

May the breath of my life be merged with the universal life-force. May my body be burnt to ashes. O fire, that is in the mind! You are identical with the syllable *oum*. May you remember all my earlier lives and may you remember all the acts that I performed in them. O Agni! Remember all that deserves to be remembered. Remember my past acts.

O Agni! Lead us along righteous paths so that we may attain the best of wealth. O god! You are acquainted with the acts and minds of all beings. Preserve us from all manner of heinous sin. We chant many hymns in your honour.

Thus ends the *Isha Upanishad*. Associated with each *Upanishad*, there are verses known as *shanti*

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patha, that is, hymns for peace. These are chanted at the beginning and the end of the *Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* for the *Isha Upanishad* is as follows. Since these are often recited in Sanskrit, we give the original Sanskrit in addition to the English translation.

Oum purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavashishyate

oum shantih shantih shantih

That (the *paramatman*) is complete, this (the universe) is also complete. The complete universe was obtained from the complete *paramatman*. But if a complete entity is taken away from a complete entity, it is that which is complete (the *paramatman*) that remains. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

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THE KENA UPANISHAD

(This text used to be called the *Talavakara Upanishad*, after the school of the *Sama Veda* to which it originally belonged. It subsequently came to be known as the *Kena Upanishad* after it separated from the above school. The name is due to the first words of the text, *keneshitam* or *kena ishitam* meaning, by whose will. The text has thirty-five *shlokas*, and is divided into four parts (*khanda*). The first two parts are composed in verse and are concerned with the qualities of the divine essence (*brahman*). (The *brahman* is used synonymously with the *paramatman*). The third and fourth parts are in prose and were probably composed earlier. They discuss the relationship between the gods and the *brahman* and establish the subservience of the gods to the *brahman*.)

Khanda One

Whose is the will that spurs the mind to all thoughts? Whose is the will that drives the life-force to all action? Whose is the will that inspires men to speech? Who is the radiant one who makes the eyes see and the ears hear?

(The above questions are asked by the disciple and the teacher replies in the subsequent verses.)

He is the one who is the ear of all ears, the mind of all minds, the word of all words, the life of all lives and the eye of all eyes. Those who know this lose all interest in sensual pursuits and withdraw themselves from the material world. It is thus that

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they attain immortality. When they die, they do not have to be born again.

The eye or the mind cannot reach the place where the *brahman* is. Speech cannot reach the *brahman*. I myself do not know the *brahman*. How can I instruct others about his nature?

The *brahman* is distinct from all objects that are known. But the *brahman* is also distinct from all objects that are not known. There have been teachers earlier who have instructed us on the nature of the *brahman*. This is what they have told us.

The *brahman* cannot be described with words. The *brahman* is the one who makes words and speech manifest. Know that to be the *brahman*. Men worship that which is distinct from the human soul. But such an object of worship is not the *brahman*.

The *brahman* is that which cannot be thought of by the mind. But the *brahman* is that which lights up the mind. So say those who know of the *brahman*. Know that to be the *brahman*. Men worship that which is distinct from the human soul. But such an object of worship is not the *brahman*.

The *brahman* is that which cannot be heard by the ear. But the *brahman* is that which gives hearing to the ears. Know that to be the *brahman*. Men worship that which is distinct from the human soul. But such an object of worship is not the *brahman*.

The *brahman* is that which one cannot smell. But the *brahman* is that which gives the power to smell.

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Know that to be the *brahman*. Men worship that which is distinct from the human soul. But such an object of worship is not the *brahman*.

Khanda Two

You may tend to think, "I know well what the *brahman* is like". But if that is the case, you have merely got to know the minutest forms of the *brahman* that pervade physical bodies and the celestial sphere. You still have to meditate on what the *brahman* is like.

(The disciple replies), "I think I have got to know the nature of the *brahman*."

I do not think that I have got to know the nature of the *brahman* well. I do not think that I know the *brahman*. But nor do I think that I do not know the *brahman*. He who realises the significance of the statement, "I know and I do not know", he alone is the one who has got to know the *brahman*.

Wisdom lies in the statement that, he who does not know the *brahman*, knows the *brahman*. He who thinks he knows the *brahman*, knows nothing. The truly learned never proclaim that they know the *brahman*. It is the ignorant ones who aver that they know the nature of the *brahman*.

When wisdom and intelligence light up the soul, it is then that the *brahman* becomes known and one becomes truly learned. It is this knowledge that leads to salvation. It is the *brahman* who leads to immortality. Knowledge of the *brahman* frees one from bondage.

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One who gets to know the nature of the *brahman* during his life, is indeed successful. If such knowledge is not attained, one suffers in the darkness of ignorance. One is born again and again. The learned ones visualise the *brahman* in every object of the world. They withdraw themselves from the material world. They become immortal like the *brahman* itself.

Khanda Three

When there was a war between the gods and the demons, the *brahman* made the gods triumph. But the victory turned the heads of the gods. They thought, "It is we who have triumphed. It is to us that the glory is due."

The *brahman* realised that the gods had fallen prey to vanity. For the sake of their welfare, he made himself manifest before them. But the gods did not realise who this person was. They did not realise that he deserved to be worshipped.

The gods told Agni (the fire-god), "You are the one who knows everything. Go and find out who this *yaksha* (a semi-divine species) is." "I will," replied Agni.

Agni went to the *yaksha*. "Who are you?", asked the *yaksha*. "I am known as Agni," replied the fire-god. "I am the one who knows everything."

"What are you capable of doing?" asked the *brahman*. "I can burn up all the objects on earth," replied Agni.

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The *brahman* placed a straw before the fire-god and said, "Burn this up." Agni went to the straw and summoned up all his energies. But try as he might, he could not burn up the straw. Agni returned from the *yaksha* and told the gods, "I have not been able to find out who this revered one is."

The gods then told Vayu (the wind-god), "O Vayu! Go and find out who this *yaksha* is." "I will," replied Vayu.

Vayu went to where the *brahman* was. "Who are you?", asked the *brahman*. "I am Vayu," replied the wind-god. "I am also known as Matarishva."

"What are you capable of doing?" asked the *brahman*. "I can blow away all the objects on earth," replied Vayu.

The *brahman* placed a straw before the wind-god and said, "Blow this away." Vayu went to the straw and summoned up all his energies. But try as he might, he could not blow the straw away. Vayu returned from the *yaksha* and told the gods, "I have not been able to find out who this revered one is."

The gods then told Indra, "O Maghavan! Go and find out who this *yaksha* is." Indra went to where the *brahman* was, but the *brahman* disappeared.

(Indra was the king of the gods and Maghavan was one of his names.)

However, in the sky there appeared a beautiful woman adorned in gold. She was Uma, the manifestation of the knowledge of the *brahman*

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(*brahmavidya*). (The interpretation is that, when the *brahman* disappeared, Indra did not return to the gods. He began to meditate and pray to the *yaksha*. Stirred by his faith, *brahmavidya* became personified in the form of Uma and appeared before him).

"Who was the revered one?" Indra asked Uma.

Khanda Four

"That was the *brahman*," said Uma. "It was the *brahman* who brought you gods the glory of victory." It was from Uma's words that Indra got to know about the *brahman*.

The gods Agni, Vayu and Indra succeeded in approaching the *brahman*. It was thanks to this, that they became superior to the other gods.

But Indra went closest to the *brahman* and got to know about the nature of the *brahman*. It was thanks to this, that Indra became supreme among the gods.

About the *brahman*, it is said that the *brahman* can be seen in a flash of lightning. The *brahman* can be seen in the blinking of an eye. These are the natural manifestations of the *brahman*.

It has been advised that one's mind should be concentrated on the *brahman*. One should repeatedly think that one's mind has merged into the radiance of the *brahman*. The mind should only meditate on the *brahman*. That is the way to spiritual upliftment.

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The *brahman* is famous as he is revered and worshipped by all living beings. All the elements salute a person who worships the *brahman*.

"O teacher! Impart to me the sacred knowledge that only a teacher can grant."

"You have been taught the sacred knowledge. I have made you conversant with the secrets of the *brahman*."

If the *Upanishads* are compared to the human body, control of the mind and the senses, along with meditation, constitute the feet. The *Vedas* are the four limbs. And true knowledge forms the heart.

He who learns about the *brahman* is freed from all sin, emancipated from all the bonds of the world. He resides in eternal heaven and merges into the *brahman*. He becomes part of the *brahman*.

Thus ends the *Kena Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* for this *Upanishad* is as follows.

Oum saha navavatu saha nou bhunaktu saha viryam karvavahai tejasvinavadhitamastu ma vidvishavahai

Oum shantih shantih shantih

May the *brahman* equally protect both of us (the teacher and the disciple). May both of us be granted the knowledge equally. May both of us equally possess the powers to acquire knowledge. May our learning be successful, may we not hate each other. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be

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peace. (You may have wondered why the invocation to peace occurs thrice. The first invocation takes care of physical ailments, the second of natural catastrophes and the third of violence caused by animals.)

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THE KATHA UPANISHAD

(The *Katha Upanishad* deals with the story of Nachiketa. This story is also to be found in the *Taittiriya samhita*, in a section known as the *katha* segment. This nomenclature reflects the emergence of the text from a school known as the *katha* school. The name subsequently passed on to the *Katha Upanishad*. There are two chapters (*adhyaya*) in the *Katha Upanishad*. As the philosophical parts are more developed in the second chapter, it is hypothesised that the second chapter was a later addition. Each of the chapters is divided into three sections (*vallis*). There are 119 *shlokas* in the *Katha Upanishad* and the entire text is in verse.)

Chapter One

Valli one

The sage Vajashrava had a son. This son performed a sacrifice so that he might go to heaven. On the occasion of the sacrifice, he donated all that he possessed. Vajashrava's son had a son named Nachiketa.

(It will later be stated that Nachiketa's father was the sage Goutama.)

Nachiketa was only a child. But he was stirred by faith at the sight of the various items of donation that were being brought to the place of the sacrifice. Nachiketa observed that the cows that were being donated were too old to have calves and too weak to eat grass or drink water. He concluded that a person

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who donated such cows was destined to live (after death) in a world that was full of sorrow.

Nachiketa asked his father, "Whom are you going to donate me too?" He repeated the question a second time and a third. (Obviously, the father did not reply on the first two occasions.) The father retorted, "I will donate you to Yama."

(Yama was the god of death).

Nachiketa thought, "I am superior to many others. I am also the equal of many others. There must be some special reason why my father desires to donate me to Yama."

(The sense is that, Nachiketa is superior to others or their equal. He is not inferior. Normally an inferior object, as with the cows, is donated. If someone who is not inferior is being donated, there must be some special objective in mind.)

Nachiketa said, "Father, remember our ancestors and the righteous sages of today. They all abide by the truth. Man is like grain. He withers away like grain and is born again like grain."

(A lot is left implicit. Righteousness mean abiding by the truth, that is, keeping one's word. Since Nachiketa's father had said that Nachiketa would be donated to Yama, the word would have to be kept. Since Yama was the god of death, this meant that Nachiketa would have to be sent to the land of the dead. But this was no reason for sorrow. Like grain, man is born to die and be reborn. After the above *shloka*, there is a lack of continuity. Obviously,

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Nachiketa went to Yama's abode. Since Goutama's worry and anger are mentioned, Nachiketa must have gone without his father's consent. Yama was away at the time. Nachiketa waited three days for Yama to return. When Yama returned, his relatives addressed him in the following words.)

A *brahman* guest is like a fire that comes to a household. (Therefore, such a guest is to be welcomed. The *brahmanas* constituted the first of the four castes. Their duties were to act as priests, perform sacrifices, study and pray. Nachiketa was a *brahmana*.) The feet of such a guest should be washed with water so that peace may descend on the household. O Yama! Bring water so that Nachiketa's feet may be washed.

That household where a *brahmana* fasts is cursed. (Nachiketa had not eaten till Yama's return.) The householder may have wished to obtain all sorts of objects. All these wishes will come to nought. The householder may have associated with righteous men and performed sacrifices. He may have been sweet of speech and may have dug ponds and wells. But all these good deeds will get nothing. They are nullified if a guest fasts. The sons and animals of the householder are destroyed.

Yama told Nachiketa, "O *brahmana*! Your are my guest and I worship you. You have spent three nights under my roof without eating. I pray to you so that my welfare may be ensured. For each of the nights, I offer you a boon. Three boons are yours for the asking."

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Nachiketa said, "O Yama! Let the first boon be this. May my father Goutama not worry about me. May he look upon me with favour and may he not be angry with me. When I return from your house, may he recognise me and greet me with pleasant words."

(The question of recognition may seem strange. What is meant is that Goutama should not take Nachiketa to be a ghost.)

Yama replied, "Your father is descended from the sages Aruni and Uddalaka. Your distinguished father will recognise you. In future, he will love you just as much as he did in the past. It is my decree that he will lose all thought of anger when he sees you. Thereafter, he will sleep many nights in peace and happiness."

Nachiketa said, "In heaven there is no fear. You are not present in heaven. And therefore, the residents of heaven have no fear of old age and death. Those who live there know no hunger or thirst. They are free from all misery and live in happiness."

Nachiketa continued, "There are those who know the art of a fire-sacrifice. They use this to attain the immortality that heaven confers. You know the art of a fire-sacrifice. I am asking you in all humility to teach me the technique of fire-sacrifice. That will be the second boon."

Yama replied, "O Nachiketa! I will teach you the nature of fire. That knowledge leads to heaven. Listen attentively and learn. Agni is the road to

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heaven. Agni is the refuge of the world. And you will find Agni in the wisdom of the learned."

Fire is the original element from which all objects were created. Yama taught Nachiketa the secret of the fire. He taught Nachiketa the number of bricks that must be collected to build a fireplace. He taught Nachiketa the method of selecting different types of fire. Nachiketa digested what he had been taught and repeated the instructions. Yama was pleased at Nachiketa's success and said the following.

"I am pleased that you are such a good student," said Yama. "As a token of my pleasure, I grant you an additional boon. This particular sacrificial fire will be known by your name. Accept also this musical and bejewelled garland."

The fire named after Nachiketa is the *nachiketa* fire. One who is instructed by his mother, his father and his teacher and lights the *nachiketa* fire, overcomes the cycle of birth and death. He devotes himself to performing sacrifices, giving alms and studying the *Vedas*. He learns from the sacred texts and meditates on the *brahman*. The great *brahman* of many qualities is always in his heart. Such a person knows true peace.

Three times must the *nachiketa* fire be lit by one who knows how many bricks are to be used in the building of the fireplace. A person who knows the nature of the *nachiketa* fire will meditate on the quality of the fire itself. Even before he dies, such a person will be able to free himself from the bonds of

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Yama. Free of sin and misery, he will be blessed with happiness in heavenly abodes.

Yama said, "O Nachiketa! As the second boon, you desired to learn about the sacrificial fire that leads to heaven. I have granted you that boon. This fire will be known by your name. Now ask for the third boon."

Nachiketa replied, "When men die, there is some confusion about whether the *atman* (the human soul) continues to exist or not. Some people aver that the *atman* continues to exist, others negate this assertion. Please tell me which is right. That is the third boon I ask for."

(Yama decided to test Nachiketa.)

Yama said, "What you wish to know is something that even the gods are not sure of. Knowledge of the *atman* is not very easy to comprehend. O Nachiketa! Ask for some other boon instead. Do not wish to learn about the *atman*."

Nachiketa replied, "O Yama! You have yourself stated that even the gods are not conversant with the nature of the *atman* and that this is learning that is not very easy to grasp. There can be no better teacher than you on these obscure matters. There can therefore be no better boon than what I have asked for."

Yama said, "Why don't you wish to live for a hundred years? Why don't you wish to be blessed with sons and grandsons? Ask for cows, horses,

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elephants and other animals. Ask for gold and kingdoms on earth. I will grant you the boon that you can live for as long as you wish to."

"Or ask for some other comparable boon instead. What about gold and jewels? What about a long life? May you be the king of many kingdoms. I will grant you the power to possess all objects that you desire in heaven and on earth."

"Ask for any object that you want and I will grant it to you. What about the celestial nymphs (*apsaras*) who travel in chariots with their musical instruments? Do you not wish to be served by them? That is something no man can attain. Ask for any of these objects. But do not ask about what happens after death."

Nachiketa replied, "O Yama! The objects that you have tempted me with are transient. They will not last till tomorrow. Such pleasures merely sap men of their energies. Everything that is created only lasts for a short while. I don't want your chariots. I don't want the celestial nymphs with all their singing and dancing."

"Man cannot be satisfied with wealth alone. Since I have met you, I know that wealth will be mine. As long as you are on your throne, I also know that I will have a long life. I have already asked for the boon I want."

"Inhabitants of earth are mortal. But they can ask for boons from the immortal gods. The pleasures that come from the songs and dances of celestial

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nymphs are but fleeting. Why should one ask for a long life?"

"O Yama! Men have doubts about whether the *atman* exists or not after death. The answer to this is true knowledge. Tell me the answer to this mystery. There is no other boon that Nachiketa wants."

Valli Two

Yama said, "There are two paths that can be followed. Each path is distinct from the other and each ties men down in a distinct way. There is the path that strives for heaven and for pleasure obtained from possessing sons and animals. There is also the path that seeks to obtain salvation through knowledge. Of these two paths, the path of knowledge leads to welfare. And an individual who strives for the path of pleasure never obtains salvation."

"He who is ignorant does not know the difference between the two paths. But the learned one can distinguish between them. Such a learned person knows that the path of knowledge is superior and accepts it in preference to the path of pleasure. The ignorant one prefers the path that leads to the preservation of the physical body and the possession of sons and animals."

"O Nachiketa! I repeatedly tempted you with objects of pleasure and those that bring material happiness. You have passed the test. You have not chosen the path of wealth as other men would have."

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"Ignorance and knowledge are two separate things and do not go hand in hand. O Nachiketa! I realise that you truly thirst for knowledge. Several objects of desire have not been able to tempt you."

"The ignorant ones believe themselves to be learned. They believe themselves to be well-versed in the sacred texts. They are like the blind being led by the blind. They keep going round and round in a circle of ignorance."

"He who is addicted to wealth and worldly pursuits does not appreciate the reality of what comes after death. He thinks that there is no life after life in this world is over. Such a person can never free himself from my bonds or those of death."

"The *atman* is an entity about which very few people know. Even if they are told about the *atman*, very few individuals can comprehend its nature. Extremely rare are individuals who can teach about the *atman* or learn about it. Rare is the skilled teacher and rarer still the student who know about the *atman*."

"There are ignorant ones who think they can teach about the *atman*. They have not been able to comprehend the nature of the *atman*. The *atman* appears to them in different forms. The only learned instructor is one who knows no difference between the *atman* and the universe. He alone is capable of dispelling all doubt. The *atman* may be proved to be as small as an atom. But, in reality, it is smaller still. The *atman* is actually beyond all debate."

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"O my beloved Nachiketa! You have not obtained your intelligence through any debate. A learned teacher cannot be one who argues and debates. A really learned teacher can instruct his disciple about the true meaning of reality. O Nachiketa! You have some perception of that which is permanent. May I have many inquisitive disciples like you."

"I know very well that the fruits obtained by performing righteous deeds are transient. These transient objects cannot indicate the path that leads to that which is permanent. This is a truth that I do know. Nevertheless, I have lit the *nachiketa* fire and have used it to obtain objects that are temporary. I have obtained for myself the title of Yama."

"O Nachiketa! You have understood well the fruits that material objects can bring. You have understood that the refuge of the universe is the great *brahman*. He is the one who should be worshipped; he is the one who is the object of all sacrifices. Thanks to your wisdom, you have comprehended this and have given up material objects."

"The *brahman* is difficult to comprehend; he is in your heart. He can be felt in the physical body. But he is the permanent one who can be appreciated only through meditation. This is the path that rises above all thoughts of happiness and unhappiness."

"Men learn of the *brahman* and understand that they are one with the *brahman*. Once they accept this, they realise that the *brahman* is distinct from the physical body. It is this feeling that makes them

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identify themselves with the *brahman*. The *brahman* is the source of all bliss, he brings happiness to those who have grasped this knowledge. I know that Nachiketa is ready to appreciate the knowledge of the *brahman*."

Nachiketa said, "I understand that the *brahman* is not that which is righteous. He is not that which is evil. The *brahman* is not the action, nor is he the actor. He is not the past, the present or the future. Tell me more about the *brahman*."

Yama replied, "All the *Vedas* describe one object that is worth striving for. The fruits of all meditation lead to this object. This object is the *brahman* and the syllable *oum* is his symbol."

"The syllable *oum* signifies that part of the *brahman* which does not act. It also signifies that part of the *brahman* which acts. The learned ones worship the syllable *oum* as the *brahman* and attain salvation."

"This is the best path that there is, the worship of *oum* as symbol of both facets of the *brahman*. Such a person merges into the *brahman* himself."

"The *brahman* is not born and he does not die. The *brahman* was not created, nor was anything created from it. The *brahman* is without birth, ancient and eternal. When the physical body dies, the *brahman* which is in the *atman* does not die."

"An assassin may think that he has killed the *atman*. One who has been killed may think that his

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atman has been assassinated. But they are both ignorant. The *atman* cannot kill anyone. Nor can it be killed."

"The *atman* is smaller than the smallest object. It is larger than the largest object. The *atman* is present in the heart of every living being. If the heart is pure, an individual who has controlled his senses can visualise the *atman*. He is thus freed of all unhappiness."

"Even if the *atman* is seated, it can travel afar. Even if the *atman* is sleeping, it can move. The *atman* is beyond all happiness and unhappiness. Who but a learned one can comprehend the *atman*?"

"The *atman* does not adopt a physical form. But it is present in all physical bodies. The great and omnipresent *brahman* is there in all transient objects. A learned individual who understands this is freed from all misery."

"The *brahman* cannot be appreciated by studying the *Vedas*. He cannot be appreciated by listening to the recitals of sacred texts. The *brahman* cannot be imagined. He reveals himself to those who are blessed. The *brahman* becomes manifest to such people."

"He who has not given up evil pursuits cannot appreciate the *brahman*. He who has not given up sensual pleasures cannot appreciate the *brahman*. He who has not meditated and controlled his mind cannot appreciate the *brahman*."

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"At the time of destruction, the *brahman* destroys all that there is. Where will one find the learned one who fully understands the nature of the *brahman*?"

Valli Three

Both the *brahman* and the *atman* are present in the physical body. The *atman* savours directly the fruit of all action. So does the *brahman*, by association. Those who know about the *brahman*, know this fact. So do the learned ones who light the sacrificial fire five times, or the *nachiketa* fire three times. These learned ones know that the *brahman* and the *atman* are always with one another, they are like light and shadow.

The great *nachiketa* fire is the bridge to salvation for those who wish to perform sacrifices. Through its aid, we are able to understand the nature of the *brahman*. Through its aid, we are able to cross the ocean that life on earth is. We can reach the fearless security of the shore.

The brain is like a charioteer and the physical body is like a chariot. The *atman* is the owner of the chariot and the mind is the bridle.

The learned ones think of the senses as the horses. Objects that can be savoured through the senses constitute the path along which the horses travel. But the *atman* presides over the physical body, the senses and the mind.

If the mind is not pacified, the intelligence is virtually without consciousness. In that case, the

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senses become like violent horses that have gone out of control. The chariot veers off its path.

When the mind is pacified, the intelligence is conscious. The senses are like horses that have been controlled. The chariot sticks to the prescribed path.

If the mind is not pacified, the intelligence is without consciousness. Man falls prey to the senses. Such is the ignorance that the charioteer does not attain salvation. He is tied down to the cycle of birth and death.

He whose consciousness acts like a charioteer, can control and purify his mind. He is not reborn on earth.

When consciousness acts like a charioteer, the bridle that is the mind remains under control. Such a person attains objects that are out of this world. That indeed is the best path that there is.

Material objects are superior to the senses. The mind is superior to wealth. Wisdom is superior to the mind. But the *brahman* is superior to them all.

Part of the *brahman* is in the *atman*. But the part of the *brahman* that is in the universe is superior to the part that there is in man. Superior to this too is the supreme spirit (*purusha*). There is nothing above the *purusha*. The *purusha* is all refuge and all salvation.

The *purusha* can be detected in living beings in the form of the *atman*. The learned ones can visualise the *purusha* through their wisdom.

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Learned ones surrender the senses to the mind and the mind to wisdom. They surrender wisdom to the *brahman* that is in man and the *brahman* that is in man to the *brahman* that there is in the universe. They contemplate the merger of this *brahman* pervading the universe in the supreme spirit.

Arise! Awake! Go to the best of teachers and learn the sacred knowledge. The learned ones say that the path to true knowledge is as narrow and difficult as a razor's edge.

(The above *shloka* is often quoted. It is therefore worth reproducing the original Sanskrit.)

uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nivodhata

khurasya dhara nishita duratyaya durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti.

The *brahman* has no sound or form, the *brahman* has no touch, taste or fragrance. He is constant and eternal. The *brahman* has neither beginning nor end. The greatness of the *brahman* is beyond any dispute. A person who learns the nature of the *brahman* becomes immortal.

Those who hear an account of what Nachiketa heard and what Yama said, become learned and are revered like the *brahman* himself.

If someone who is pure of heart recounts this amongst *brahmanas*, great are the fruits that he obtains. This is an account that should be recited at the time of funeral ceremonies.

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Chapter Two

Valli One

The *brahman* does not make himself manifest to the external senses. It is because of this that living beings can visualise the external world, but not the *brahman*. Those who wish to become learned and immortal control their senses. They can see the *brahman*.

The ignorant ones lust after material objects. As a result of this, they become engulfed in ignorance and action. The learned ones can visualise the *brahman* in all the objects of the universe. They desire nothing that belongs to this world.

It is thanks to the *brahman* that men can savour form, taste, touch, sound and smell. There is nothing in this entire universe that is unknown to the *brahman*. It was this *brahman* that Nachiketa asked about.

It is the *brahman* who makes men see objects, be they awake or asleep. Learned ones visualise the great and omnipresent *brahman* and overcome all sorrow.

A wise man knows that the fruit of all action vests with the *brahman*. The *brahman* regulates all forms of life. A learned person who realises this overcomes all fear.

Prior to creation, the five elements did not exist. From the wise *brahman* was created *hiranyagarbha*. *Hiranyagarbha* is there in all life forms. He who sees *hiranyagarbha*, sees the *brahman*.

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(*Hiranyagarbha* is a specific manifestation of the infinite *brahman*. The word means "created from a golden (*hiranya*) womb (*garbha*)".)

To the goddess Aditi can be traced all the gods. Aditi was created when the five elements were created. Aditi is nothing but *hiranyagarbha*. He who sees Aditi in his heart, sees the *brahman* himself.

(Aditi was regarded as the mother of the gods. In this context, she seems to be the female personification of *hiranyagarbha*.)

Like a mother who protects her womb, the sacrificial priests protect the *jataveda* fire between two sticks. Sacrificial priests make oblations into the sacrificial fire. But through their powers of meditation, the learned ones can visualise the fire in their hearts. Both these fires are forms of the great *brahman*.

(The sacrificial fire was ignited by rubbing two pieces of stick together. These two sticks were known as *uttararani* and *adhararani*. *Jataveda* means the learned one and is one of Agni's titles.)

It is from the *brahman* that the sun rises and it is into the *brahman* that the sun sets. All the gods merge into the *brahman* and no one is superior to him.

The *brahman* is here, but he is also there. The *brahman* is there, but he is also here. The two are the same. He who does not understand this concept of unity, has to be born again and again.

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It is through the mind that one can visualise the *brahman*. The *brahman* cannot be thought of as consisting of separate parts. He who does not understand this concept of unity, has to be born again and again.

The centre of the heart is but one finger in length. The *brahman* exists in the heart in his minute form. But in his great form, the *brahman* presides over the past, the present and the future. This is the *brahman*. One who can visualise this form, overcomes all thought of fear.

The *brahman* presides over the past, the present and the future. But he has a minute and shining form which is present in the *atman*. The *brahman* is here today. And he will be here tomorrow.

Rain showers down on mountain peaks and flows into the foothills in many streams. The rain is but one, although it seems to be different in the different streams. A person who distinguishes between the elements and the *brahman*, makes the same mistake of differentiating between aspects of the same entity.

(The following *shloka* makes it clear that all that has been said above was said by Yama to Nachiketa.)

O son of Goutama! A stream of pure water mingles into another stream of pure water and one cannot tell the streams apart. Like that, the *brahman* and the *atman* mingle and the learned ones do not try to tell them apart.

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Valli Two

The *brahman* has a city that has eleven gates. (This is a symbol for the human body, the eleven gates being the eleven outlets of the body.) Men meditate on the *brahman* and are freed from the confines of the physical body. They do not have to be born again.

The *brahman* goes everywhere. He is present in heaven as the sun. He establishes everyone and is present in the atmosphere as Vayu. He is present on earth as Agni. He is the *soma* juice (a drink) in pots. The *brahman* is present in men, in gods and in the sky. He is established in all that is true. He is in the water in the conch-shells and in the rivers that flow down from the mountains. He is present in rocks and in sacrifices. The *brahman* is everywhere, and yet, he is present only in his own pure form. The *brahman* is supreme.

The *brahman* rules over the breath that enters the body. He rules over the breath that is exhaled from the body. The *brahman* is present in the heart in the form of the *atman*. It is to the *brahman* that the senses make offerings.

The *brahman* resides in the physical body as its possessor. Once the *atman* is delinked from the physical body (at the time of death), nothing remains in the body. The *brahman* is the *atman*.

Living beings do not survive on the basis of exhaling and inhaling breath. They survive because of the *atman* which presides over these two types of breath.

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O Nachiketa! I (Yama) am teaching you the secret knowledge of the *brahman*. I will also tell you what happens to the *atman* after death, if one does not recognise the nature of the *brahman*.

Depending on the deeds one has performed and depending on one's learning and thoughts, one may adopt a physical body and be born in the womb of one's mother. One may also be born as trees and plants.

When the senses sleep, there is an entity that is awake. He is the pure and immortal one whose decree rules everywhere. He is the *brahman* and all objects on earth find refuge in him. The *brahman* cannot be overcome and it is the *brahman* that Nachiketa asked about.

When fire enters the earth, Agni adopts the form of the object that is being burnt. Like that, the *brahman* enters physical bodies and adopts physical forms. The *brahman* is embraced by physical bodies. But he is more than these physical bodies.

When Vayu enters the earth, he adopts the physical forms of different bodies and becomes the force of life in them. Like that, the *brahman* enters physical bodies and adopts physical forms. But the original form of the *brahman* remains independent and unaltered.

It is the sun that makes living beings see. But the sun is untainted by evil sights and sins that may be seen. Like that, the *brahman* is in every living being. But he is untouched by worldly sorrow. He is beyond such feelings.

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The *brahman* rules over the souls of all living beings. The *brahman* is one, but he divides himself into many forms. Learned ones can realise the *brahman* through wise teachers. Such learned ones are truly happy. No one else can be happy.

The *brahman* is the eternal cause of all transient objects. He is the consciousness of sentient beings. The *brahman* is unique. But he decrees the actions of many living beings. Learned ones can realise the *brahman* through wise teachers. Such learned ones are truly happy. No one else can be happy.

The *brahman* cannot be explicitly felt. His presence can only be felt implicitly. How can I comprehend the nature of the *brahman*? Does he make himself manifest? Can I establish the existence of the *brahman*? These are the questions that men ponder over.

The sun does not make the *brahman* manifest. Nor do the moon and the stars. Lightning cannot manifest him. How can fire therefore manifest him? The radiance of the *brahman* is his own. It is this radiance that makes other objects manifest.

(The above *shloka* is quoted often and the Sanskrit is as follows.)

na tatra suryo bhati na chandratarakam nema vidyuto bhanti kutohayamagnih

tameva bhantamanubhati sarvam tasya bhasa sarvamidam vibhati.

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Valli Three

This world is like a banyan (*ashvattha*) tree that is upside down, with the root on top and the branches at the bottom. The root is the radiant and constant *brahman*. All the worlds find refuge in the *brahman* and no one can overcome him. This is the *brahman* that Nachiketa asked about.

It is because the *brahman* exists that everything that can be seen was created and is pulsating with life. The *brahman* is as terrible as a bolt of lightning. Those who know the *brahman*, become immortal.

The fire radiates heat in fear of the *brahman*. The sun radiates light in fear of the *brahman*. Indra, Vayu and Yama perform their prescribed duties in fear of the *brahman*.

One who comprehends the nature of the *brahman* before his death is freed. Otherwise, his ignorance results in his being born again and again on earth.

In a mirror, a face can be clearly seen. Even on earth, the *brahman* can be clearly seen through one's wisdom. But in all other worlds, the *brahman* is seen only imperfectly, like a reflection in water. (Therefore, one should try to understand the nature of the *brahman* while on earth and not wait till one gets to reside in heaven.) But there is also *brahmaloka*, where the *brahman* himself resides. There the *brahman* can be distinctly seen, as distinct as light from shadow.

The senses are created from the sky and they decay and die. But there is no reason to sorrow over this fact. The *atman* is distinct from the senses.

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The mind is superior to the senses and wisdom is superior to the mind. Greatness is superior to wisdom and the illusion (*maya*) of the universe is superior to greatness.

It is certain that the *brahman* is omnipresent and that the *brahman* is superior to the illusion. Men who get to know the *brahman* are freed and do not have to be born again.

The form of the *brahman* cannot be seen with the eyes. The *brahman* is beyond the power of sight. It is through powers of meditation that the presence of the *brahman* can be felt in the heart. The *brahman* is realised through intelligence. Those who understand that the *atman* is one with the *brahman*, become immortal.

In such a state of wisdom, the five organs of sense become placid. Nor does the mind function. The learned have described this state of wisdom as the supreme goal.

Yoga is the state of perfect union. (*Yoga* literally means union.) This is the union between the *brahman* and the *atman*. But to one who seeks *yoga* the external world must seem to be in peace. The senses must be controlled. This is important as *yoga* may bring both good and evil.

The *brahman* cannot be realised through speech, the mind or the eyes. Those who believe in the *brahman* say that he exists. There are atheists who do not believe in the existence of the *brahman*. How can the *brahman* become manifest to such atheists?

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The essence of the *brahman* can only be felt if it is believed that he exists. When the *brahman* is felt to exist, his radiance shines forth.

Men have many desires. It is when these desires are destroyed that mortal men become immortal. In their own physical bodies, men can then unite with the *brahman*.

When mortal man triumphs over his thoughts within his physical body, he becomes immortal. This is what all the *Vedas* teach.

There are one hundred and one veins that emanate from the heart. One of these veins emerges through the crown of the head. It is along this vein that the life force rises up towards immortality. When the life force courses along the other veins, men are tied down to the world.

The form of the *brahman* which is in the heart is only one finger in length. Just as the head of a blade of grass is separated from the stem, the *brahman* must patiently be separated from the physical body. The purified part which is left is the immortal *brahman*.

This is the *brahmavidya* that was taught by Yama. Nachiketa learned this technique of *yoga* and attained salvation. He became pure and immortal. Others who realise the nature of this fundamental reality will also attain salvation.

This ends the *Katha Upanishad*. We will skip the *shanti patha*, as it is the same as for the *Kena Upanishad*.

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THE PRASHNA UPANISHAD

(The *Prashna Upanishad* is associated with the *Atharva Veda* and, apart from the *Mundaka Upanishad*, is probably the oldest *Upanishad* that is associated with the *Atharva Veda*. The *Prashna Upanishad* is composed entirely in prose and is in the form of questions (*prashna*) asked by six disciples of the sage Pippalada. That is how the text obtains its name. It belongs to the Pippalada recension of the *Atharva Veda*. As mentioned, there are six chapters, each in the form of a question. The total number of stanzas is 67.)

The First Question

Sukesha was the son of Bharadvaja, Satyakama of Shibi, Souryayani of Garga, Kousalya of Ashvala, Vaidharbhi of Bhrigu and Kabandhi of Katya. (Son does not necessarily mean a direct son, it can also be a descendant.) The six sons were famous sages who were devoted to the *brahman*. They thought that the sage Pippalada would be able to satisfy their thirst for the *brahman*. So they went to Pippalada.

Pippalada told them, "Control your senses, practise celibacy, and believe in god. If you still wish to know about the *brahman*, come back to me after one year. You can then ask questions. If I do know the answers, I shall certainly satisfy you."

Kabandhi came back after one year and asked Pippalada, "O sage! What is the origin of all living beings?"

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Pippalada replied, "The *brahman* became Prajapati in his desire to create. He meditated so that he might create and disseminate the knowledge of the *Vedas*. He created Agni and Soma so that creation might be nurtured."

(In this context, Agni means the sun and Soma the moon.)

"The sun is the source of life and the moon is the source of foodgrains. Everything survives on foodgrains, be it thick of form or thin. All forms are thus nothing but foodgrains".

"The sun rises in the east and blazes forth in his energy. It is the rays of the sun that instil the force of life into living beings. Wherever the sun radiates his rays, east, west, north, south, up or down, the rays enter into the bodies of living beings and make them thrive."

"This is the entity that is there in all living beings. This is the entity that is life and fire throughout the universe. This is the entity that rises as the sun. And it is about this entity that the following has been said in the *Rig Veda*."

"The learned know the omniscient sun whose form permeates the universe. Many are his rays and he is the source of all life. He is the unique one who is like the eye of the universe. The sun radiates heat and his rays are everywhere. The sun rose to be the life force of living beings".

"The year is like Prajapati. Prajapati has two paths (*ayana*), the northern and the southern.

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Those who adopt the path of action and perform their deeds faithfully, attain the abode of the moon. But they have to be born again. Householders who desire sons may reach heaven, but theirs is the southern path. It is along this path that they attain the ancestors.)

(The *shloka* is quite obscure. A year is divided into two *ayanas*, each consisting of six months. These are known as *uttara* (northern) *ayana* and *dakshina* (southern) *ayana*. However, the above imagery is difficult to interpret. The southern path is identified with the moon and regarded as inferior. In contrast, the northern path is identified with the sun and is regarded as superior.)

"Meditation, celibacy, faith and worship enable one to attain the *brahman* in the sun. This is the northern path. At the end of this path is the sun, the refuge of all life. This is the world of immortality and of freedom from fear. The northern path leads to the best of places, as one who treads it does not have to be born again. The ignorant cannot walk along this path. There is a *mantra* about this and it is as follows."

"Some describe the sun to have five feet (the five seasons of spring, summer, monsoon, autumn and winter). Others describe the sun as a father who possesses twelve faces (the twelve months). Still others say that in the region that is above the atmosphere, the sun rains down showers. Seven are the wheels with which the sun travels. (The sun's chariot is believed to have seven wheels.) The sun

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gives rise to six seasons. (Autumn is divided into early autumn and late autumn.) The sun measures out time and it is in the sun that the universe finds refuge."

"Prajapati is there in the months. *Krishnapaksha* is that part of him which constitutes foodgrains. And *shuklapaksha* is that part of him which constitutes life. Learned sages perform their sacrifices in *shuklapaksha* and ignorant ones in *krishnapaksha*."

(*Shuklapaksha* is the lunar fortnight during which the moon waxes and *krishnapaksha* is the lunar fortnight during which the moon wanes.)

"Prajapati is there in the space of twenty-four hours. That part of him which is life exists there in the day. And that part of him which is foodgrains exists there in the night."

"Prajapati is there in the foodgrains. When foodgrains are digested, the life force is obtained. And it is from this that all living beings are born."

"Those who observe religious rites in honour of Prajapati, have sons and daughters born to them. Truth vests with those who meditate and observe celibacy. It is they who attain the abode of the *brahman* and that of the moon."

"The pure ones are not characterised by deceit, untruth or devious behaviour. It is they who attain the abode of the *brahman* and that of the sun."

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The Second Question

Vaidharbhi next asked the sage Pippalada, "O sage! How many gods are to be found in the bodies of living beings? How many manifest themselves in various objects? Who are supreme amongst these gods?"

The sage replied, "The sky is a god. The wind, the fire, the water and the earth are also gods. The speech, the mind, the eyes and the ears are gods. All of these gods thought that they were supreme. They were so proud that they thought that it was they who made the human body thrive."

"The breath of life told them not to be so vain. It was the breath of life which divided itself into the five senses and made the body prosper. But the five senses were so proud that they refused to accept this assertion."

"The breath of life then decided to forsake the body. As soon as the breath of life began to ascend upwards towards the crown of the head, the senses became weak. They were strengthened only when the breath of life returned. When a queen bee flies up, so do the other bees. When a queen bee returns, so do the other bees. The breath of life is like the queen bee. On realising this, the other senses began to worship the breath of life."

"The breath of life shines in the fire. It is the breath of life which is the sun, the moon, the earth and the wind. Indra is nothing but the breath of life. The breath of life is all that is manifest and not manifest. The breath of life is immortal."

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"Like spokes surround the nave of a wheel, everything else surrounds the breath of life. The *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and *brahmanas* and *kshatriyas*, are all manifestations of the breath of life. So are sacrifices."

"It is the breath of life which is there in the womb as Prajapati. The breath of life is born in the form of parents. Together with the other senses, the breath of life resides in the body. It is because of the breath of life that living beings can savour various pleasures."

"The breath of life carries oblations made at sacrifices to the gods and the ancestors. It is the breath of life, known as *atharva*, that sustains the body."

(We have used the phrase "sustains the body". A literal translation of the text is juices of the body (*angirasa*). The *Angirasas* are also famous sages. And so was Atharva or Atharvan.)

"The breath of life is the supreme godhead. The power of the breath of life is in Rudra, the preserver. The power of the breath of life is in the sun, the lord of all the stars. In the form of the sun, the breath of life rises and sets in the sky."

"The breath of life rains down as showers. All living beings rejoice then, as they know that foodgrains will grow."

"The breath of life is pure and it is the lord of all objects. The breath of life is present in the sacrificial

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fire. It is to the breath of life that oblations are made. The breath of life is Matarishvan, our father."

"May the breath of life that is in speech be pacified. May the breath of life that is in the eyes and the ears be pacified. May the breath of life that is in the mind be pacified."

"All that is on earth and all that is in heaven are controlled by the breath of life. Like a mother protects her sons, the breath of life protects us. The breath of life grants us wealth and wisdom."

The Third Question

Kousalya next asked, "O sage! How is life born? How does it enter the body? How does the breath of life divide itself and reside in the body? How does the breath of life rise up? How does it control external objects and how does it control the senses of the body?"

Pippalada replied, "It is because you know about the *brahman* that you are asking these questions. I will therefore tell you the answers."

"The breath of life is created from the *brahman*. Just as the body has a shadow, the breath of life is the shadow of the *brahman*. It is like a shadow that the breath of life resides in the body in order to perform acts that are desired."

"An emperor appoints officials to rule over villages. Like that, the breath of life appoints the other senses to rule over various parts of the body."

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"Within the body, the breath of life divides itself into various parts. In the lower regions, it is known as *apana*. In the upper regions of the nose, the eyes and the ears, it is known as *prana*. It is there in the stomach and the digestive system as *samana*. *Samana* is like a seven-tongued flame that digests the food."

"The soul resides in the heart. From the heart there lead out one hundred and one main veins (*mula nadi*). Each of these is divided into one hundred branches (*shakha nadi*). Each of the branches is divided into seventy-two thousand sub-branches (*prashakha nadi*). *Vyana* moves along these."

(*Vyana* is that part of the breath of life which flows in the heart and the surrounding regions. There are 101 main veins, 101 × 100 = 10100 branches and 10100 × 72000 = 727200000 sub-branches. This adds up to a total of 727210201 veins.)

"There is a vein known as *sushumna*. This leads up to the crown of the head and along this flows that part of the breath of life known as *udana*. It is along this vein that the performers of righteous deeds go to righteous lands and the performers of evil deeds go to evil lands. Those who perform both good and evil are born in the land of men."

(Death comes when *udana* penetrates the crown of the head.)

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"Living beings have different types of desires. It is these desires that pervade the breath of life at the time of death. The *udana* and the *atman* take the being to the abode beyond death."

"He who worships the breath of life, is never separated from his sons and grandsons. He unites with the breath of life and becomes immortal. The following *shloka* is about the breath of life."

"Know of the origin, arrival and existence of the breath of life. Know of its lordship over the five elements. These are the spiritual and natural manifestations of the breath of life. Worship the breath of life and become immortal."

The Fourth Question

Souryayani next asked Pippalada, "O sage! Who rules over the body when it sleeps? And who rules over the body when it is awake? Who are the gods who rule over dreams? Who is the one with whom is vested the happiness of sleep? And who is the entity who is not affected by the states of awakening, sleeping or dreaming?"

Pippalada replied, "The rays of the setting sun unite with the solar system. When the sun rises again, the rays spread out in all the directions. Like that, all the objects and all the senses unite with the *brahman*. When a person sleeps, the *brahman* does not see, or hear or touch. He does not speak, or accept objects or give them up. He does not move and does not experience feelings of happiness. It is then said that the living being is sleeping."

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"The body is like a city. And the fire that is the breath of life stays awake. The *apana* is like the fire that burns in households, the *vyana* is like the fire that is used to make offerings to the gods and the ancestors. The *vyana* is therefore like the sacrificial fire."

"The acts of exhalation and inhalation are like the offerings made at sacrifices. The *samana* is like a person who performs the sacrifice. *Udana* is the fruit of the sacrifice. It is *udana* which unites the mind with the *brahman*."

"When one dreams, the mind is like a god. May one dream of that which has been seen before. May one dream of that which has been heard before. May one dream of that which has been felt in diverse regions. May one dream of that which has been seen, heard or felt in this birth or earlier ones. All that is true and all that is false, all that has been said and all that has not, those are the things that the mind witnesses in dreams."

"When the mind is under control, there are no dreams that are seen. The *atman* is felt in the body then. This is the state of bliss known as *sushupti*."

"Like birds return to a tree which houses their nests, the forms of all objects merge into the *brahman*."

"The earth and its fragrances, the water and its juices, energy and forms, the wind and touch, the sky and sound, the eyes and form, the ears and sound, the nose and smell, the tongue and taste, the

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sense of touch, words and speech, the two hands and objects that can be grasped with them, the two legs and the places that they take one to, the mind and its thoughts, the intelligence and objects of speculation, wisdom, ego and the sense of the self, all of these objects are part of the *brahman*. The creator *hiranyagarbha* and the entire universe are part of the *brahman*."

"In the human body, it is the *brahman* who sees, touches, hears, tastes, smells and thinks. It is the *brahman* who controls and performs all action. The *atman* merges into the *brahman*."

"The *brahman* has no name or title, nor does he have any qualities. He is beyond all darkness. He who knows the *brahman*, becomes all-knowing. The following *shloka* is about this."

"All the gods and all learning merge into the *brahman*. All the senses, all the elements and all living beings, merge into the *brahman*. He who realises this, becomes learned and sees himself in all objects."

The Fifth Question

Satyakama next asked Pippalada, "O sage! There are those among men who worship the *brahman* all their lives. What world do they go to after their deaths?"

Pippalada replied, "The essence of the brahman is captured in the syllable *oum*. The learned ones think of *oum* as representing the *brahman* and worship him through it."

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"The syllable *oum* is formed of the letters *o*, *u* and *ma*. The letter *o* stands for the *Rig Veda*. He who worships the *o* part alone, is born on earth as a man. He spends his life in meditation, celibacy and righteous deeds, attaining great fame."

"The letter *u* stands for the *Yajur Veda*. He who worships the *u* part alone, goes to the land of the moon after his death and enjoys great prosperity there. After spending many years in the land of the moon, he is born on earth as a man."

"The letter *ma* stands for the *Sama Veda*. He who worships the *ma* part alone, merges into the radiant sun after his death. Like a snake is shorn of its old skin, such a person is shorn of all his sins. Such a person gets to see *hiranyagarbha* himself."

"None of the letters singly has the power to make men immortal. But if all three are worshipped in unison, as in *oum*, men become immortal. A person who meditates on the entire syllable *oum*, attains true placidity of mind."

"The *Rig Veda* permits one to attain the land of men, the *Yajur Veda* the land of the moon, and the *Sama Veda* the land of the sun. But he who worships all of *oum*, merges into the *brahman* in *brahmaloka*. *Oum* symbolises all that is calm, eternal, immortal, fearless and supreme."

The Sixth Question

Sukesha next asked Pippalada, "O sage! The prince of Kosala is named Hiranyanabha. Once he

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came to me and asked if I knew about the being with sixteen faces. I knew about no such being and could not therefore satisfy the prince. I could not very well lie. Had I lied, I would have met with certain destruction. The prince climbed onto his chariot and went away dissatisfied. But please tell me about the being with sixteen faces."

Pippalada replied, "There are sixteen forms that constitute the being you speak of. And he is to be found in the heart."

"The *brahman* wondered when he would reside in the body and when he would leave it."

"The *brahman* created life, faith, the sky, the wind, energy, water, the earth, senses, the mind, foodgrains, power, meditation, incantations, sacrifices, the worlds and names of objects that populate the worlds."

(The types of objects created add up to sixteen.)

"When the rivers flow into the ocean, they lose their individual entities and names. They become the ocean. Like that, when these sixteen objects unite with the *brahman*, they lose their individual entities and names. They become the *brahman*. A person who learns this cuts off the bonds of time and becomes immortal."

"The *brahman* is like the nave of a wheel and the spokes radiate out from him. Learn the nature of the *brahman*. That knowledge will enable you to overcome death."

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Pippalada told his disciples, "That is all that I know about the *brahman*. There is nothing more to know."

The disciples worshipped Pippalada and said, "You are like our father. You have enabled us to pass from the land of ignorance to that of wisdom. Praise be to the learned sages."

This ends the *Prashna Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* is as follows.

oum bhadram karnebhih shrinuyam deva bhadram pashyemakshabhiryajatrah sthira-irangaistushtuvamsastanubhih rvyashema devahitam yadayuh oum shantih shantih shantih

O gods! May we use our ears to hear words that ensure our welfare. O revered gods! May we use our eyes to see sights that are fit to be seen. May our bodies be firm and healthy so that we can spend our lives in worshipping you and in performing acts that please you. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

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THE MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

(The *Mundaka Upanishad* is associated with the *Atharva Veda* and, together with the *Prashna Upanishad*, is one of the two oldest *Upanishads* that are associated with the *Atharva Veda*. Certain ascetics shaved off (*mundana*) their heads. The *Mundaka Upanishad* derives its name from this act. The text is entirely in verse and some stanzas surpass the other *Upanishads* in the beauty of composition. The *Mundaka Upanishad* has three sections (*mundaka*) and each of these sections is divided into two sub-sections (*khanda*). The total number of verses is 64.)

Mundaka One

Khanda One

Brahma is the creator of the entire universe and he ensures its preservation. He is the supreme ancestor (*pitamaha*). He is chief among the gods. Brahma created himself and taught his eldest son, Atharva, the knowledge of the *brahman*.

(*Pitamaha* literally means paternal grandfather. The word *svayam* means "by onself" and the word *bhu* means to create. Since Brahma created himself, he is known as Svayambhu.)

Atharva passed on the knowledge that he had gleaned from Brahma to the sage Angir. Angir taught it to the sage Satyavaha, descended in the line of the sage Bharadvaja. The sage Angira was also descended in the line of Bharadvaja. The

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knowledge passed from teacher to disciple and finally vested with the sage Angira.

Shounaka was a righteous householder. He went to Angira and said, "O sage! Teach me that which is supreme amongst all forms of knowledge."

Angira replied, "There are two types of knowledge. The first is known as *para* and the second is known as *apara*. Those who are learned in the *Vedas* draw this distinction."

"*Apara* knowledge is the knowledge of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, *shiksha* (phonetics), *kalpa* (religious practice), *vyakarana* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymology), *chhanda* (metres) and *jyotisha* (astronomy). *Para* knowledge is the learning that enables one to attain the *brahman*."

"The *brahman* cannot be seen or felt. He is without origin and without form. He cannot be realised with the eyes or the ears. The *brahman* is eternal and omnipresent. He has no hands or feet. Many are his forms and he is smaller than the minutest object. The *brahman* has no expression, but he is the origin of the elements. The knowledge that enables one to realise the *brahman* is the *para* form of knowledge."

"A spider produces its thread and draws it in again. Like the herbs that are produced by the earth and like the hair that is produced by bodies, every object in the universe owes its origin to the *brahman*."

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"When the *brahman* decided to create, he inflated himself. From this was born *pradhana* (chief), a form of the *brahman*. From *pradhana* emerged *hiranyagarbha* and from *hiranyagarba*, the mind. The mind created the five elements and from the five elements were created all the worlds. In the worlds are actions and the fruits of such actions."

"The *brahman* is omniscient. From the *brahman* was created *hiranyagarbha*, all names, all forms, and all foodgrains."

Khanda Two

"Vasishtha and the other sages have recommended various acts as being prescribed by the *Vedas*. All of these acts are righteous, but they constitute the *apara* form of knowledge. These acts are prescribed in the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. Do perform these deeds if you hanker for the fruits of actions."

"When the flames of the sacrificial fire rise up, place all your oblations in them."

"He who does not keep track of auspicious days, months or seasons when performing sacrifices, is doomed. He who does not make oblations at the proper time and he who does not attend to his guests, is doomed. He knows no peace for seven worlds to come."

"The sacrificial fire has seven tongues. They are named *kali*, *karali*, *manojava*, *sulohita*, *sudhumravarna*, *sfulingini* and *vishvaruchi*."

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"He who offers oblations into the sacrificial fire at the appointed time, is taken to the land of the sun and blessed by solar rays. He is taken to the world where the supreme among the gods reside."

"The rays of the sun welcome those who perform such righteous deeds. Great is their good fortune and they are rewarded with heaven as a result of their righteous deeds."

"Sacrifices are acts that are performed without a thirst for knowledge. Eighteen individuals are involved in a sacrifice-sixteen officiating priests, the householder who is performing the sacrifice, and his wife. All of these eighteen individuals are mortal. They are ignorant because they perform good deeds in pursuit of the rewards. But they will be born again and will fall prey to old age and death."

"Those who are ignorant think that they are learned and know everything. They think that they are to be respected, but they follow a path that has no meaning. They are like the blind being led by the blind."

"Since they are immersed in the darkness of ignorance, they are like children. They think that they are the ones who are successful. They are so addicted to their acts that they do not know what is true. Once they have savoured the rewards of their actions, they are dislodged from heaven."

"The ignorant ones are devoted to the world. They think that the chief aim is to attain their desires. They know not the path that is better. They pleasure

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the fruits of their actions in heaven. But thereafter, they are reborn in the world of men, or in worlds that are even more inferior."

"Learned householders control their senses. Learned ascetics beg for alms and live in the forests. Such learned ones perform the deeds that are prescribed for them. But they worship *hiranyagarbha* and know no evil deeds or righteous ones. This is the superior path that takes them to the eternal world where there is *hiranyagarbha*."

"The supreme goal cannot be attained by deeds. A *brahmana* who realises this, forsakes the fruits of actions and withdraws himself from the world. He desires to learn the truth. And with sacrificial wood in his hand, he goes in search of a learned teacher who is conversant with the nature of the *brahman*."

"If the disciple is calm and has succeeded in controlling his senses, the teacher will teach him about the *brahman*. Armed with this knowledge, the disciple will realise the *brahman*."

Mundaka Two

Khanda One

"The *para* form of knowledge is alone the truth. As thousands and thousands of sparks emerge from a fire, so many beings emerge from the *brahman* and merge into him again."

"The *brahman* is radiant, but has no form. The *brahman* is both inside and outside. He is not born. Because he has no life or mind, he is pure. The *brahman* alone is supreme."

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"It is from the *brahman* that life is created. The mind, the senses, the sky, the wind, fire, water and the earth, owe their origin to him."

"His head is heaven, his eyes are the sun and the moon and the directions are his ears. His speech is the *Vedas* and the wind is his breath of life. The entire universe is in his heart. It is from the *brahman*'s feet that the earth was created. The *brahman* is in the heart of all the elements."

"With the aid of the sun, the heaven was created from the *brahman*. From the heaven was created the moon and from the moon, there emerged clouds. The clouds gave birth to herbs on earth. Living beings have parents. From the *brahman*, many living beings were created."

"The *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda* were created from the *brahman*. Rituals, sacrifices, sacrificial fees, sacrificers and the years were created from the *brahman*. The *brahman* created the worlds that the moon purifies and the sun heats up."

"The different types of gods owe their origin to the *brahman*. Men, animals, birds, life, foodgrains, meditation, faith, truth and celibacy were created by the *brahman*."

"There are seven organs of sense in every living body. All of these were created from the *brahman*."

"The mountains and the rivers owe their origin to him. Many rivers and herbs were created from the

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brahman, many the juices that sustain the body. In his minutest form, the *brahman* is in every living being, surrounded by the five elements."

"The *brahman* is all the action and all the wisdom of the universe. The *brahman* is supreme and immortal. He is everything. Those who realise that the *brahman* resides in the heart of every living being, are freed from all ignorance."

Khanda Two

"The radiant *brahman* is in the heart of every living being. He is the best of wealth. He is in all birds and men. He is in all objects, sentient and insentient. He is present in his minutest form, and he is present in grosser forms as well. The supreme and pure *brahman* is worshipped by everyone. Living beings find it difficult to know him. Realise the *brahman* to be part of your own being."

"He is the radiant one. He is smaller than the smallest of objects. He is bigger than the largest of objects. The immortal *brahman* is the supreme wealth. He is in all the worlds and in all the beings who populate these worlds. The *brahman* is life; the *brahman* is the speech and the mind. The *brahman* is truth, the *brahman* is immortality. It is the *brahman* who must be known. Try to know him."

"The wisdom of the *Upanishads* is like a powerful bow. Make your intelligence a sharp arrow. Concentrate. Use the bow and the arrow to find your mark, the *brahman*."

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"The syllable *oum* is the bow, the *atman* is the arrow. It is said that the *brahman* is the object of the bow and the arrow. Do not hesitate in trying to achieve your aim. Be as unmoving as the arrow and attain your target."

"Realise the *brahman* in whom can be found heaven, the earth and the atmosphere. In him reside your senses and your hearts. Forget everything else and attain the one and only *brahman*. That is the way to salvation."

"The spokes of a wheel surround the nave. Like that, the veins surround the heart. And in the heart is the being with many forms. He is the *brahman*. Meditate on him, meditate on his symbol, the syllable *oum*. May you be blessed so that you may cross the ocean of ignorance."

"He is the fount of all wisdom; he is omniscient. The *brahman* resides in the radiance of the heart. He rules over the mind and life. He is bliss. He is immortality. The learned ones are those who can visualise the *brahman* in their own *atmans*."

(The second half of the above *shloka* is sometimes quoted and we therefore reproduce the Sanskrit.)

manomayah pranasharireneta pratishthitohanne hridayam sannidhaya

tadvijnanena paripashyanti dhira anandarupamamritam yadvibhati.

"He is the cause. He is action. When an individual visualises the *brahman*, his heart is freed from all

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bondage. All his doubts are dispelled. He rises above the confines of mere action."

"The *brahman* is supreme and radiant. He has no form and he banishes all ignorance. He is like a sword in a scabbard. He is pure and full of energy. It is he who makes all objects shine. It is only the learned ones who know of the *brahman*."

"The sun cannot manifest the *brahman*, nor can the moon or the stars. Lightning cannot make him manifest. How can the fire possibly manifest him? It is because the *brahman* is radiant that the entire universe shines. All other objects draw their radiance from him."

(This *shloka* is also quoted quite often. But it also occurs in the *Katha Upanishad* and we reproduced the Sanskrit there.)

"The *brahman* is in the forefront and he is everything. The *brahman* is to the back, he is to the north and the south. He is above and below. This universe is nothing but the supreme *brahman*."

Mundaka Three

Khanda One

There were two birds which lived on the same tree. They were always together and they had the same names. One of the birds ate the sweet fruit of the tree. The other bird did not eat the fruit of the tree. It merely saw.

(The two birds are the *atman* and the *brahman*. The *atman* savours the fruit of life, but the *brahman* does not.)

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Living beings get addicted to the tree (life) and suffer. They worry and are miserable. The *brahman* is revered by many. When living beings realise the glory of the *brahman*, they overcome all misery.

One who meditates, visualises the creator of the universe. His hue is golden. He is complete in himself. The *brahman* is the origin of the universe. Learned ones who visualise the *brahman*, overcome all good deeds and sin. They become calm and no longer feel miserable.

The *brahman* is the life of all life. It is he who is present in all the elements. The best of the learned ones find all their peace and joy in the *brahman*.

Ascetics who are pure of heart visualise the *brahman*. The *brahman* is radiant and pure. He can be seen by those who are unwavering in their concentration and unflinching in their pursuit of truth. It is through celibacy and wisdom that one can realise the *brahman* in one's heart.

Truth alone will triumph, and untruth will be vanquished. That supreme of beings can be realised through the path of truth. It is the path of truth that successful sages follow. That is the path that is strewn with truth. That is the road to truth itself.

(All Indians are familiar with part of the above *shloka* and it deserves to be reproduced in its entirety.)

satyameva jayate nanritam satyena pantha vitato devayanah yenkramantyrishayo hyaptakama yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhanam.

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The *brahman* is great and divine. He is smaller than the minutest of forms. His form is beyond conception, yet many are his forms. He is beyond the most distant of objects. But he is very close to the physical body. Even on earth, living beings can realise the *brahman* in their hearts.

The *brahman* cannot be seen with the eyes. He cannot be realised through speech. The senses, sacrifices and meditation cannot realise the *brahman*. The *brahman* is realised when the mind is pure. He has no form. But one who meditates with a pure mind, can visualise the *brahman*.

The *brahman* rules over the senses and the minds of all living beings. When the mind is pure, the *brahman* manifests himself. The body consists of the five elements. Provided one's mind is pure, one can visualise the *brahman* in the physical body.

Learned ones have pure minds and know the *brahman*. They can obtain whatever objects and whatever worlds they desire. They are like the *brahman*. Therefore, those who desire salvation should worship such learned ones.

Khanda Two

The universe is immersed in the *brahman*. Pure is his radiance. The *brahman* is the sole refuge of learned ones. Those who worship such learned ones, do not have to be born again.

Material objects have different qualities. Those who desire the qualities of material objects, are born in the material world. They are immersed in desire.

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But those who have merged into the *brahman*, overcome all desire. In this life itself, such learned ones triumph over desire.

The *brahman* cannot be realised by reading the sacred texts. The *brahman* cannot be realised through thinking or hearing. He who worships the *brahman*, realises him. The *brahman* is the only object that such a person desires.

The *brahman* cannot be realised by one who is weak, nor can he be realised through ascetism alone. These techniques of meditation are merely aids to realise the *brahman* in one's *atman*.

Those who know the nature of the *brahman*, are satisfied with nothing short of true learning. Their *atmans* merge into the *brahman*. They control their senses and become devoid of desire. As long as they are alive, such calm and cool individuals see the *brahman* in all the objects that are around them.

The knowledge of the *Vedanta* is the knowledge of the *brahman*. Ascetism helps to purify the mind. Salvation is attained by those who purify their minds and realise the *brahman*. Such individuals attain salvation even before they die.

At the time of death, the breath of life separates from the body. The senses merge into various gods. The *atman*, with its mind and its actions, merges into the *brahman* and loses all individuality.

A flowing river loses its name and characteristics when it merges into the ocean. Those who are learned, forget their names and their individualities.

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They see themselves as part of the supreme *brahman*.

He who knows the *brahman*, becomes like the *brahman* himself. Everyone descended from him gets to realise the *brahman*. Such a learned one is beyond all good deeds or evil ones. He has no sense of happiness or unhappiness. He is freed from the bondages of the heart and becomes immortal.

The knowledge of the *brahman* must only be revealed to those who perform righteous deeds, in accordance with the sacred texts. It must be revealed to those who are learned in the *Vedas* and worship the *brahman* with faith in their hearts. The knowledge of the *brahman* must be revealed to those who devotedly make oblations into the sacrificial fire.

This is the wisdom that has come down from the sage Angira. He who has not observed religious rites, is not entitled to this wisdom. We salute the learned sages. We salute the learned sages, again and again.

This ends the *Mundaka Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* is the same as for the *Prashna Upanishad*.

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THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

(The *Mandukya Upanishad* is entirely in prose. It is the shortest *Upanishad*, with a mere twelve stanzas. Part of the original text seems to have been lost. This *Upanishad* is associated with the *Atharva Veda*. But the name is derived from a school of the Rig Veda, known as the Mandukas. The essential point made in this *Upanishad* is that the syllable *oum* is an expression of the universe.)

Everything in the universe is captured in the syllable *oum*. The past, the present and the future, are all in *oum*. All that is beyond these three states of time, is also in *oum*. The syllable *oum* is the way to attain proximity to the *brahman*.

Everything is the *brahman*. The *atman* is the *brahman*. The *atman* is the way to attain the *brahman*.

The first part of the *brahman* is fire. Fire savours the state of being awake; fire feels the external world. Fire enjoys all the material objects. Fire has seven limbs and nineteen faces.

(The nineteen faces of fire are the ten senses, the five constituents of the breath of life, the mind, intelligence, ego and the heart. Fire has a head in heaven, the sun forms the eyes, the wind is the breath of life, the sky is the body, the water forms the lower organs, the earth is the feet and the sacrificial fire is the mouth. These are the seven limbs that are mentioned.)

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The second part of the *brahman* is in all material objects. The desire to possess material objects savours the state of being asleep. This desire has seven limbs and nineteen faces.

(This is especially obscure, don't you think?)

There is a state that is neither that of being asleep, nor that of being awake. This is known as *sushupti*, or deep slumber. No material objects are desired then, and no dreams are seen. He who is in a state of *sushupti*, is calm. All is bliss then and all is realised through one's feelings. A person in a state of *sushupti* is happy. Even when he dreams, he is conscious. The state of *sushupti* is the third part of the *brahman*.

The *brahman* is the supreme godhead. He is omniscient, he knows everything. He is the origin. It is the *brahman* who created the elements. It is into the *brahman* that, at the time of destruction, the elements disappear. The *brahman* is not a material object. He is not the universe. He is not a state of sleeping, nor is he a state of being awake. The *brahman* is not the state of *sushupti*. He is not learned, nor can he be realised through learning. He is not insentient. The *brahman* cannot be seen, or used, or felt or visualised. The *brahman* cannot be indicated. He can be felt through the *atman*. He is calm and unique. The *atman* is the *brahman*. That is how the *brahman* is realised.

The syllable *oum* is identical with the *brahman*. The three components of the syllable, *o*, *u* and *ma*, signify the three parts of the *brahman*.

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Fire is like the letter *o*, which comes first. Fire is the origin, fire is the foremost part of the *brahman*. A worshipper who realises this, becomes chief among his peers and attains all the objects of his desire.

Material objects are like the letter *u*. It is this letter that presides over the state of sleep. He who knows this, becomes learned. He transcends all thoughts of enmity and friendship. Everyone who is descended from him becomes learned in the knowledge of the *brahman*.

The letter *ma* symbolises the state of *sushupti*. He who knows this, gets to know about the entire universe. He knows the true nature of the universe. He knows about its properties and its origin.

The learned ones know about the syllable *oum*. They attain a state that is beyond the mind and beyond speech. They realise the *brahman* who is the source of all bliss. The *brahman* is the unique one. To realise this is to merge into the *brahman* himself.

This ends the *Mandukya Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* is the same as for the *Prashna Upanishad*.

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THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

(The *Taittiriya Upanishad* is associated with the *Krishna Yajur Veda* and is entirely in prose. There was a sage named *Yajnavalkya*. He was the disciple of the sage Vaishampayana and learnt the *Yajur Veda* from Vaishampayana. Once, Vaishampayana was displeased with his disciple and asked him to return all that he had learnt. Yajnavalkya vomited out the *Yajur Veda*. Other disciples adopted the form of *tittira* birds and accepted what had been vomited out. This school accordingly came to be known as the *taittiriya* school. The *Yajur Veda* that was vomited out is known as the *Krishna Yajur Veda* and it is with this that the *Taittiriya Upanishad* is associated.

There are three parts in the text. The first is known as *shikshavallyadhyaya*, the second as *brahmanandavallyadhyaya* and the third as *bhriguvallyadhyaya*. Each of these parts is divided into lessons (*anuvaka*). There are 25 stanzas in the first part; 23 in the second part; and 15 in the third part. There are thus 63 stanzas in the entire text.)

Shikshavallyadhyaya

Lesson One

May the god Mitra grant us happiness. May the god Varuna grant us happiness. May the god Aryama grant us happiness. May the gods Indra and Brihaspati grant us happiness. May the god Vishnu, whose footsteps are gigantic, grant us happiness. We bow in obeisance before the god Vayu; he is the

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brahman himself. O Vayu! We worship you. You are the *brahman* who is before us. We will call you the *brahman*, we will call you the incantations of the sacred texts, we will call you truth. May the *brahman* protect me, may the *brahman* protect the one who is the speaker (of these words). May the *brahman* protect me, may the *brahman* protect the one who is the speaker. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

(The above *shloka* is often recited and the Sanskrit is as follows.)

oum sham no mitrah sham varunah
sham no bhavatvaryama
sham no indro brihaspatih
sham no vishnururukramah
namo brahmane
namaste vayo
tvameva pratyaksham brahmasi
tvameva pratyaksham brahma vadishyami
ritam vadishyami
satyam vadishyami
tanmamavatu tadvaktaramavatu
avatu mam avatu vaktaram
oum shantih shantih shantih

(This *shloka* is also the *shanti patha* for the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, together with the *shloka* that was given as the *shanti patha* for the *Kena Upanishad*.)

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Lesson Two

Let me tell you about the objects that deserve to be learnt. These are letters (*varna*), pitch (*svara*) and the length of the pitch (*matra*). One has to be careful in uttering sounds. They have to be pronounced properly. When combined together, the letters make phrases or sentences.

Lesson Three

May the two of us, the teacher and the disciple, become equally famous. May the radiance of the *brahman* be felt in both of us equally. The letters give rise to all forms of learning that are there in the *mantras*. Let there be two letters which are combined in the making of a *mantra*. The first letter is like the earth and the second letter like heaven. The atmosphere is the space that is between the two letters. Vayu symbolises the union of the two letters. This is the root of all philosophy.

If one is considering light, fire is the first letter of light and the sun is the second letter. The water is the space that is between the two letters. Lightning symbolises the union of the two letters.

If one is considering education, the teacher is like the first letter and the disciple is like the second letter. Learning is the space that is between the two letters. The reciting of the *Vedas* symbolises the union of the two letters.

If one is considering children, the mother is like the first letter and the father is like the second letter. The child is the space that is between the two

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letters. The birth of children symbolises the union of the two letters.

If one is considering the mouth, the lower jaw is like the first letter and the upper jaw is like the second letter. When words are uttered, the palate is the space that is between the two letters. The tongue symbolises the union of the two letters.

This is the sacred knowledge. He who worships this sacred knowledge is blessed with sons, animals and foodgrains. He gets to reside in heaven and is energised by the *brahman*.

Lesson Four

The syllable *oum* is superior to the *Vedas*. It is present in all forms of sound. In it is captured the immortal essence of the *Vedas*. The syllable *oum* is the *brahman*. May the *brahman* make me wise. O god! May I attain the immortality that the knowledge of the *brahman* confers. May my physical body be healthy. May my tongue be the source of sweet speech. May my ears get to hear of the *brahman*. The *brahman* is there in you as well. But your vision is clouded by wordly learning. Listen to the knowledge that I have learnt.

O syllable *oum* ! Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth. After you have granted me wisdom, bring to me Lakshmi with an abundance of animals. May she bring me clothing, cows, foodgrains and articles of drink. May she ensure a steady supply of these objects and may she nurture them for my use. May celibate mendicants come to me from all the

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directions. (This *shloka* is obviously being recited by a teacher who craves celibate mendicants as disciples.) May celibate mendicants come to me in all forms. May celibate mendicants come to me to study the sacred texts. May they be able to control their physical bodies. May they be able to control their minds.

May I be famous among men. May I be richer than the richest. May I merge into the essence of the *brahman*. May the *brahman* merge into me. May all my sins be cleansed by the touch of the *brahman*. O *brahman*! The rivers flow downwards into the plains. The months disappear into the year. May celibate mendicants come to me from all the directions. O *brahman*! You are the refuge of everything. Make yourself manifest to me. May I become a part of you.

Lesson Five

The three famous *mantras* are *bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *svar*. (There are seven *lokas* or regions in the universe—*bhuloka*, *bhuvarloka*, *svarloka*, *maharloka*, *janaloka*, *tapaloka* and *satyaloka*. *Bhuloka* is the earth, *bhuvarloka* is the atmosphere, and *svarloka* is heaven. Corresponding to each *loka*, there is a *mantra*.) A fourth *mantra* is *mahah*. This was revealed to the sage Mahachamasya. The *mantra mahah* symbolises the *brahman*. It is *mahah* that is the essence. The other gods are merely reflections.

Mahah is the sun. It is because of the sun that all the regions are sustained. Agni is *bhuh* and Vayu is *bhuvah*. The sun is *svar* and the moon is *mahah*. It

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is because of the moon that all radiant objects glow. The *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* correspond to *bhuh*, the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* to *bhuvah*, and the *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda* to *svar*.

Mahah is the syllable *oum*. It is due to *oum* that all the *Vedas* attain their power. Different types of the breath of life are *bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *svar*. *Mahah* is the foodgrains, it is because of foodgrains that life is sustained. Each of the four *mantras* is further subdivided into four *mantras*. (There are thus sixteen *mantras* in all.) He who utters these *mantras*, attains the *brahman*. All the gods bring gifts to a person who has attained the *brahman*.

Lesson Six

The centre of the heart is like an immense sky. There dwells the immortal *brahman*. He is the radiant one who is the source of all learning. There is a vein that passes through the palate to the base of the head. This is known as *sushumna* and it emerges through the crown of the head. This vein is the path that leads to the *brahman*. The *mantra bhuh* establishes the worshipper in fire. The *mantra bhuvah* establishes the worshipper in the wind.

The *mantra svar* establishes the worshipper in the sun. The *mantra mahah* establishes the worshipper in the *brahman*. The *brahman* is the lord of speech, sight, hearing and knowledge. His body is the sky, his heart is the truth. He is the source of all bliss, happiness and peace. The *brahman* is immortality. These are the norms that any worshipper must follow.

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Lesson Seven

Five worldly objects are earth, atmosphere, heaven, major directions and minor directions. Five divine objects are fire, wind, sun, moon and stars. Five elemental objects are water, herbs, trees, sky and the great *purusha*.

Five parts of the breath of life are *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*. Five organs of sense are the eyes, the ears, the mind, the tongue and the skin. Five objects which make up the body are skin, flesh, nerves, bones and marrow. Five is the number that must be worshipped. It is worship that enables one to unite the material with the spiritual.

Lesson Eight

Worship the syllable *oum* as the *brahman*. *Oum* pervades everything, and everything is in *oum*. It is *oum* that is used when priests chant incantations for the gods. It is *oum* that is used when the hymns of the *Sama Veda* are chanted. It is *oum* that is used when *mantras* are recited. It is *oum* that is used when the choristers sing. The syllable *oum* signifies the sanction of the *brahman*. It is *oum* that is used when oblations are made into the sacrificial fire. *Oum* is used so that one may learn the *Vedas*. *Oum* is used so that one may attain the *brahman*.

Lesson Nine

Learn the rites that are recommended by the sacred texts. Study the *Vedas* and teach them. Speak the truth. Study and teach. Perform sacrifices. Study and teach. Control your senses

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Study and teach. Control your mind. Study and teach. Light the sacrificial fire. Study and teach. Perform sacrifices. Study and teach. Take care of your guests. Study and teach. Have children. Study and teach. Live with your wife. Study and teach. Have grandsons. Study and teach. The sage Satyavacha is descended from the sage Rathitara. Satyavacha says that truth is everything. The sage Taponitya is descended from the sage Purushishti. Taponitya says that sacrifices are everything. The sage Naka is descended from the sage Mudgala. Naka says that studying and teaching are everything. Studying and teaching are the true form of sacrifices.

Lesson Ten

I am the origin of the world and all life. My fame is as lofty as the peak of a mountain. I owe my origin to the *brahman*. There is immortality in the sun and I am part of that immortality. I am bliss. I am the wealth that is the radiant *brahman*. I am wisdom. I am immortal and eternal. These were the words of the sage Trishanku, who became learned in the nature of the *brahman*.

Lesson Eleven

After completing the instruction of the *Vedas* , the teacher addresses the disciple with the following words. Speak the truth (*satyam vada*). Perform that which is righteous (*dharmam chara*). Do not deviate from your studies. Bring wealth and satisfy your teacher (as payment for the instruction). Thereafter,

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become a householder and have children. Do not be dislodged from the path of truth. Do not be dislodged from the path of righteousness. Do not fail to protect yourself. Do not hesitate to perform acts that bring you wealth or welfare. Do not hesitate to study or to teach.

Do not hesitate to perform acts that please the gods or the ancestors. May your mother be a god for you (*matridevo bhava*). May your father be a god for you (*pitridevo bhava*). May a teacher be a god for you (*acharyadevo bhava*). May your guest be a god for you (*atithidevo bhava*). Perform only acts that are praised; do not perform other acts. Perform only rites that are recommended.

Do not perform acts that are not recommended. *Brahmanas* who are superior must be revered and offered seats. Gifts must be made with devotion, not with the absence of devotion. Donate what you can. And donate it in humility. Do not donate in hauteur. Look upon the person to whom donations are being made as a friend. There may be times when one is in doubt about proper acts and proper rites. But the solution is clear.

There will be *brahmanas* present who will be pure, wise, learned, righteous and free from desire. One should always perform acts and rites that are recommended by such *brahmanas*. If there is doubt about the acts or rites performed by others, one should resort for advice to *brahmanas* who are pure, wise, learned, righteous and free from desire. That is what is recommended. That is the advice given. That

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is what the *Vedas* say. That is the will of the gods. All rites must be performed in accordance with this dictum.

Lesson Twelve

(This is the same as lesson one, except that in lesson twelve, all the verbs are in the past tense.)

Brahmanandavallyadhyaya

Lesson One

(The first part of this lesson is the same as lesson one of *shikshavallyadhyaya* and we will therefore skip this part.)

He who knows the nature of the *brahman*, merges into the *brahman*. It has been said that the *brahman* is truth, wisdom, and all that is eternal. The heart is like a vast sky and intelligence is like a cave in the heart. He who visualises the *brahman* in one's heart, sees the *brahman* in all objects of the universe. He obtains all that may be desired. The sky was created from the *brahman*. From the sky was created the wind, the wind created fire, fire created water, water created the earth, the earth created herbs, herbs created foodgrains, and foodgrains created men. Man can be compared to a bird. The right hand is the right wing and the left hand is the left wing. The part of the body that is below the navel is like a tail. The following *shloka* is about all this.

Lesson Two

Foodgrains created all living beings that exist. Foodgrains sustain life. After death, living beings

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merge into foodgrains. Foodgrains were created before all life. Foodgrains are the best possible medicine for living beings. There are those who worship foodgrains as the *brahman*. After all, foodgrains create, sustain and destroy all living beings. Such worshippers never suffer from a shortage of foodgrains. Foodgrains were created before all the elements were created. That is why foodgrains are the best possible medicine for living beings. It is from foodgrains that the elements are created. And once they are created, the elements are sustained by foodgrains. Foodgrains are eaten by the elements. And eventually, the elements themselves are devoured by living beings.

The physical body is full of foodgrains and juices. But the physical body is like a scabbard. Inside the scabbard, there is the sword which is the *atman*. The *atman* is the breath of life. The breath of life also has the form of a bird. *Prana* is the head, *vyana* is the right wing, and *apana* is the left wing. *Samana* is the centre of the body and *udana* is the tail. There is a *shloka* about all this, and it is the following.

Lesson Three

The senses are controlled by the life force. It is the breath of life that spurs all men and animals to action. The breath of life gives life to living beings. Those who worship the breath of life as the *brahman*, attain long lives. It is the breath of life that imparts life expectancy to all elements.

In the physical body made out of foodgrains, the breath of life is the *atman*. In addition, part of the

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atman is in the mind. That which is in the mind unites with that which is in the life force. The *atman* which is in the mind also has the form of a bird. The *Yajur Veda* is the head, the *Rig Veda* is the right wing, the *Sama Veda* is the left wing, the *brahmanas* are the centre of the body, and the *Atharva Veda* is the tail. There is a *shloka* about this, and it is the following.

Lesson Four

The part of the *atman* that is in the mind cannot be comprehended through the mind or through speech. But do not be afraid of it. It alone is happiness.

The *atman* which is in the life force is like a body. And the *atman* which is in the mind merges with this. But there is also an *atman* which is in knowledge and this merges with the *atman* that is in the mind. The *atman* which is in knowledge also has the form of a bird. Faith is the head. The wisdom of the sacred texts constitute the right wing. Proper speech and rites constitute the left wing. A state of meditation is the centre of the body and greatness is the tail. There is a *shloka* about this, and it is the following.

Lesson Five

Knowledge makes sacrifices flourish and motivates them. Knowledge makes action flourish. All the gods worship the *brahman* through the power of knowledge. He who has the knowledge to realise the *brahman* and also knows the techniques

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of worship, rises above all sins and all sense of the ego. He attains all objects of desire.

The *atman* which is in knowledge unites with the *atman* which is in the mind. But apart from this, a part of the *atman* is in happiness. The *atman* which is in happiness merges with the *atman* which is in knowledge. The atman *which* is in happiness also has the form of a bird. Happiness from seeing objects of desire is the head, happiness from obtaining objects of desire is the right wing, happiness from savouring objects of desire is the left wing, and ordinary happiness is the centre of the body. Happiness from uniting with the *brahman* is the tail. There is a *shloka* about this.

Lesson Six

He who thinks the *brahman* is evil, becomes immersed in evil. He who thinks the *brahman* is truth, realises the truth that is the *brahman*.

The *atman* which is in happiness unites with the *atman* which is in knowledge. There are questions that may be asked. Do ignorant ones attain the *brahman* after their deaths? Or do they not? Do learned ones attain the *brahman* after their deaths? Or do they not?

The *brahman* decided that he would adopt many forms. The *brahman* decided that he would be created. The *brahman* pondered over the question of creation. In his wisdom, he created everything. He created everything and immersed himself in the universe.

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The *brahman* decided to act. The *brahman* is truth. He has form and is without form. He is clean and unclean. He provides sanctuary, yet he does not provide sanctuary. He is sentient and he is insentient. He is truth and he is untruth. Those who know of the nature of the *brahman*, refer to him as the truth. There is a *shloka* about this, and it is the following.

Lesson Seven

Before the universe was created, only the *brahman* existed. It was the *brahman* who created the universe. It was the *brahman* who created himself.

The creator is the juice of the universe. Living beings obtain that juice and attain bliss. Had this source of unmitigated happiness not been in the heart, living beings would not have inhaled or exhaled. The *brahman* has no form, he cannot be seen. The *brahman* cannot be described, he cannot be contained. When a worshipper visualises the *brahman*, he becomes free from all fear. Ignorant ones do not realise that the *brahman* is everywhere and are scared. The *brahman* is then a source of fear. But those who realise the unity of the *brahman* overcome all fear. There is a *shloka* about this.

Lesson Eight

It is the fear of the *brahman* that makes the wind blow. It is the fear of the *brahman* that makes the sun rise. It is the fear of the *brahman* that makes Agni and Indra perform their appointed tasks.

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The happiness that comes from knowing the *brahman* can be described. Imagine a youthful person. Let that youthful person be happy. Let him also be learned and the best of rulers. Let his body be firm and strong. Let him possess the entire world with all its wealth. This is the best happiness that man can think of. Multiply this happiness a hundredfold.

The happiness of men multiplied a hundred times becomes the happiness of *gandharvas* (a semi-divine species). The happiness of *gandharvas* multiplied a hundred times becomes the happiness of the ancestors. The happiness of the ancestors multiplied a hundred times becomes the happiness of those who have become gods by virtue of their actions.

Multiply the happiness of those who have become gods by virtue of their actions, a hundred times. This becomes the happiness of those who have become gods by virtue of following the *Vedas*. Multiply this happiness a hundred times to obtain the happiness of the ordinary gods.

When the happiness of the ordinary gods is multiplied a hundred times, it becomes the happiness of Indra.

A hundredfold of Indra's happiness is Brihaspati's happiness. A hundredfold of Brihaspati's happiness is Prajapati's happiness. A hundredfold of Prajapati's happiness is Brahma's happiness. This is the happiness obtained if one gets to know the *brahman*.

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The *brahman* is in the heart of living beings and the *brahman* is in the centre of the sun. It is the same *brahman* who is in both places. A person who realises this unity of the *brahman*, is freed from the material pursuits of the world. He knows the *brahman* who is in foodgrains; he knows the *brahman* who is in the life force; he knows the *brahman* who is in the mind; he knows the *brahman* who is in knowledge; and he knows the *brahman* who is in happiness. There is a *shloka* about this, and it is the following.

Lesson Nine

The *brahman* cannot be described by knowledge about material objects. There is infinite happiness in getting to know the *brahman*. A person who knows the *brahman*, is freed from all fear.

Such a learned person does not waste time in thinking why he performed evil acts and not good ones. Such a learned person knows the *brahman* who is beyond evil acts and good ones. Such a learned person sees the *brahman* in both evil acts and good ones. That is the secret of *brahmavidya*.

Bhriguvallyadhyaya

Lesson One

Bhrigu was the son of Varuna. Bhrigu went to his father and said, "Please teach me about the *brahman*."

His father replied, "The *brahman* can be realised through the body, the breath of life, the eyes, the

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ears, the mind and through speech. All the elements were created from the *brahman*. It is the *brahman* which nurtures all the elements. And it is into the *brahman* that all the elements will merge at the time of destruction. Try to know the *brahman*."

Bhrigu began to meditate.

Lesson Two

(Bhrigu realised the following.)

Foodgrains are the *brahman*, because it is known that it is from foodgrains that the elements are created. It is foodgrains that sustain life. And it is into foodgrains that all the elements merge at the time of destruction.

Having realised this, Bhrigu returned to his father and said, "Please teach me about the *brahman*."

"The *brahman* can be realised through meditation," replied Varuna. "Meditate."

Bhrigu began to meditate.

Lesson Three

(Bhrigu realised the following.)

The breath of life is the *brahman*. It is from the breath of life that the elements are created. It is the breath of life that sustains the elements. And it is into the breath of life that the elements merge at the time of destruction.

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Having realised this, Bhrigu returned to his father and said, "Please teach me about the *brahman*."

"The *brahman* can be realised through meditation," replied Varuna. "Meditate."

Bhrigu began to meditate.

Lesson Four

(Bhrigu realised the following.)

The mind is the *brahman*. It is from the mind that the elements are created. It is the mind that sustains the elements. And it is into the mind that the elements merge at the time of destruction.

Having realised this, Bhrigu returned to his father and said, "Please teach me about the *brahman*."

"The *brahman* can be realised through meditation," replied Varuna. "Meditate."

Bhrigu began to meditate.

Lesson Five

(Bhrigu realised the following.)

Knowledge is the *brahman*. It is from knowledge that the elements are created. It is knowledge that sustains the elements. And it is into knowledge that the elements merge at the time of destruction.

Having realised this, Bhrigu returned to his father and said, "Please teach me about the *brahman*."

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"The *brahman* can be realised through meditation," replied Varuna. "Meditate."

Bhrigu began to meditate.

Lesson Six

(Bhrigu realised the following.)

Happiness is the *brahman*. It is from happiness that the elements are created. It is happiness that sustains the elements. And it is into happiness that the elements merge at the time of destruction.

This is the knowledge that Bhrigu learnt and this is the knowledge that was taught to him by Varuna. The *brahman* begins with foodgrains and ends with the happiness that is there in the heart. He who realises this, unites with the infinite bliss of the *brahman*. He has an abundance of foodgrains, sons and animals. He becomes famous. The *brahman* energises him and makes him great.

Lesson Seven

One who knows the *brahman* follows the dictum that foodgrains must not be criticised. Foodgrains are the breath of life and foodgrains sustain the physical body. It is the breath of life which grants foodgrains and it is the breath of life which sustains the physical body. He who knows the nature of foodgrains, is blessed with foodgrains and becomes like foodgrains himself. Such a person has sons and animals and attains fame. The *brahman* energises him and makes him great.

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Lesson Eight

One who knows the *brahman* follows the dictum that foodgrains must not be ignored. Foodgrains are in water. Energy survives on foodgrains, since energy can be found in the water. Water is there in energy. He who knows the nature of foodgrains, is blessed with foodgrains and becomes like foodgrains himself. Such a person has sons and animals and attains fame. The *brahman* energises him and makes him great.

Lesson Nine

One who knows the *brahman* follows the dictum that foodgrains must be nurtured. The earth is foodgrains and foodgrains are to be found in the earth. The earth is in the sky and the sky is in the earth. He who knows the nature of foodgrains, is blessed with foodgrains and becomes like foodgrains himself. Such a person has sons and animals and attains fame. The *brahman* energises him and makes him great.

Lesson Ten

One who knows the *brahman* follows the dictum that guests must never be refused. Foodgrains must be accumulated for such guests. Foodgrains must be cooked for such guests,. Foodgrains that are served to guests always return to the householder. If the householder serves a lot of foodgrains, he will receive a lot of foodgrains in return. If the householder serves a modicum of foodgrains, he will receive a modicum of foodgrains in return. If the

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householder serves very little of foodgrains, he will receive very little of foodgrains in return.

He who knows the truth, worships the *brahman* through the process of exhalation and inhalation. He who knows the truth, worships the *brahman* through action performed by the hands and the feet. All these are forms of worship. The worship of the *brahman* is in lightning and in showers.

As fame, the *brahman* is in animals. As radiance, the *brahman* is in the stars. As satisfaction for the ancestors, the *brahman* is present in children. The *brahman* is everywhere in the sky. He who worships the *brahman* in the sky, obtains all objects. He who worships the greatness of the *brahman*, becomes great himself. He who worships the *brahman* in the mind, attains wisdom.

He who worships the *brahman* in humility, attains all the objects of desire. He who worships the greatness of the *brahman*, becomes great himself. He who worships the destructive power of the *brahman*, succeeds in destroying all his enemies. The *brahman* is in the physical body and the *brahman* is in the centre of the sun. But it is the same *brahman* who is present in both places.

A learned one withdraws himself from the material world. Progressively, he merges into the *brahman* who is in foodgrains, the breath of life, the mind, knowledge and happiness. He obtains all the foodgrains and all the forms that he wants. He roams the universe and chants the glory of the *brahman*.

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(He chants the following.)

I am foodgrains. I am foodgrains. I am foodgrains.

I thrive on foodgrains. I thrive on foodgrains. I thrive on foodgrains.

I am the one who unites foodgrains with the consumers of foodgrains. I am the uniter. I am the uniter.

I am the first and the foremost. I was created before the material and immaterial worlds and before the gods. I am the seed of immortality.

I am the foodgrain that is given to guests. Thus am I protected. It is I who destroy those who do not give foodgrains to guests.

I am the supreme godhead who rules over the entire universe. It is my radiance that flashes like the sun.

This is the knowledge of the *brahman*. Blessed is he who knows this.

This ends the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* has already been mentioned.

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THE AITAREYA UPANISHAD

(The *Aitareya Upanishad* obtains its name from a school of the *Rig Veda* and is associated with the *Rig Veda*. It is entirely in prose and is a fairly short *Upanishad*, divided into three chapters. The first chapter is further subdivided into *khandas* or sections. There are 33 verses in the entire text. The motif in this *Upanishad* is the creation of the universe. This draws upon the *purusha sukta* of the *Rig Veda*.)

Chapter One

Khanda One

Before creation, the entire universe was in the *brahman*. There was nothing else. There was no time, nor were there any objects. The *brahman* decided to create the worlds.

The *brahman* created the regions - *ambholoka*, *marichiloka*, *maraloka* and *apaloka*. All that is above heaven (*dyuloka*) is *ambholoka*. The atmosphere is *marichiloka*. (*Marichi* signifies the rays of the sun.) *Maraloka* is the earth. The region that is below the earth is known as *apaloka* .

The *brahman* inspected the worlds that he had created. He decided to create lords (*lokapala*) who would rule over these worlds. From the five elements, he created a being.

In the beginning, this being was just a lump. It was like the egg of a bird. But when the *brahman* desired to create, parts of the anatomy emerged. The

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mouth was created. The tongue was created. And Agni, who rules over the tongue, was also created simultaneously. The nose and the organs of smell were created. Vayu, who rules over the organs of smell, emerged simultaneously. The eyes and the organs of sight were made. Surya, who rules over the organs of sight, was created simultaneously. The ears and the organs of hearing emerged. The gods of the various directions, who rule over the organs of hearing, emerged simultaneously. The skin, the body-hair and the organs of touch were created. The trees and herbs emerged. The heart, the mind and the moon were made manifest. The navel was created and the breath of life followed. Death was created. And so was the god Prajapati.

Khanda Two

The gods were created and began to reside in the worlds. As for the great being, he became susceptible to hunger and thirst. The gods felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. They went to the *brahman* and asked, "Where shall we reside? How will our hunger and thirst be satisfied?"

The *brahman* offered the gods a lump that was in the shape of a cow.

"This will not suffice," said the gods.

The *brahman* offered the gods a lump that was in the shape of a horse.

"This will not suffice," said the gods.

The *brahman* offered the gods a lump that was in the shape of a man.

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"This has been created very well," said the gods. "Man is the source of all righteous action. This will suffice."

The *brahman* asked the gods to enter the body of man.

Agni became the organ of speech and entered the mouth. Vayu became the organ of smell and entered the nose. Surya became the organ of sight and entered the eyes. The gods of the directions became the organs of hearing and entered the ears. The herbs and the trees became organs of touch and entered the skin. The moon entered the heart and the god of death entered the navel.

Hunger and thirst asked the *brahman*, "What about us? What will happen to us?"

"You will live in the bodies of the gods," replied the *brahman*. "Whenever oblations are offered to the gods, you will receive a share."

Khanda Three

The *brahman* inspected the worlds (*lokas*) and the *lokapalas* who had been created. He decided to create foodgrains for sustenance.

He looked at the five elements and the elements combined to form a hard substance. This hardened substance constituted foodgrains.

Foodgrains were created for the worlds and the *lokapalas* who ruled over the worlds. But foodgrains began to run away from the *lokapalas*. The

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lokapalas tried to accept the foodgrains with their power of speech. (Since they did not know what the foodgrains were, they did not know how to use them.) But they were not successful. Had they been successful in accepting foodgrains with their power of speech, living beings who were subsequently created would have been content to merely talk about foodgrains.

The *lokapalas* tried to accept the foodgrains with their power of smell. But they were not successful. Had they been successful in accepting foodgrains with their power of smell, living beings who were subsequently created would have been content to merely smell foodgrains.

The *lokapalas* tried to accept the foodgrains with their power of hearing. But they were not successful. Had they been successful in accepting foodgrains with their power of hearing, living beings who were subsequently created would have been content to merely hear about foodgrains.

The *lokapalas* tried to accept the foodgrains with their power of touch. But they were not successful. Had they been successful in accepting foodgrains with their power of touch, living beings who were subsequently created would have been content to merely touch foodgrains.

The *lokapalas* tried to accept the foodgrains with their minds. But they were not successful. Had they been successful in accepting foodgrains with their minds, living beings who were subsequently created

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would have been content to merely think about foodgrains.

The *lokapalas* tried to accept the foodgrains with the breath of life. And they were successful. The breath of life is the same thing as foodgrains. The breath of life resides in the body with the aid of foodgrains.

The *brahman* thought, "I have to enter the physical body, as the physical body will not be able to function without me. But how should I enter the body? I can enter it through the senses of taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch or I can enter through the mind. But these senses are incapable of realising the *brahman*. Therefore, if I do this, man will never be able to realise the nature of the *brahman*."

The *brahman* entered the body through a hole (*randhra*) in the crown of the head. This is known as *brahmarandhra*. This is the way for the attainment of the *brahman*. The *brahman* resides in three parts of the body - the right eye, the mind and the heart.

Those who suffer from illusions think that they are men, or that they are unhappy or blind. Everything is the *brahman*. And the sky and the elements are no different from the *brahman* who is in the body. He who is learned sees the great *brahman* everywhere and realises that he has seen his own self.

The *brahman* is known as Idandra. But the gods also refer to him as Indra.

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Chapter Two

The energy that is in the male body leads to birth. Life is nurtured in the womb of the female body.

One's own *atman* is nurtured in one's wife's womb. It is for this reason that husbands must take care of their wives.

The child is first nurtured in the womb by the mother. But once the child is born, it is nurtured by the father. Taking care of one's own child is like taking care of one's own self. It is the cycle of birth that sustains all the worlds. Being born in one's child is like being born a second time.

The son is the reflection of the father, born so that the father's righteous deeds may be continued. When the father is old, he hands over the duties to his son. And eventually, the father departs from his physical body. That is like being born a third time.

A sage has said that he knew about the many births of the gods while he was in his mother's womb. In the womb, he was imprisoned as if in an iron fortress. But like a vulture, he freed himself from the fortress and was born. This famous sage, Vamadeva, uttered these words while he was still in his mother's womb.

Vamadeva was a learned sage who knew about the nature of the *brahman*. He freed himself from his physical body and the bondage of the material world. He attained all his desires and overcame the confines of this inferior world. He became immortal in heaven.

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Chapter Three

Who is the *brahman* whom we worship and try to attain? It is the *brahman* who gives rise to forms, sound, scent, taste and names. There is a *brahman* who entered the body through the breath of life. Is he the true *brahman*? There is also a *brahman* who entered the body through the *brahmarandhra*. Is he the true *brahman*?

The heart, the mind and the organs of sense seem to be different. Man has traits like consciousness, imagination, patience and the power of thought. He experiences feelings like rememberance and unhappiness. He performs acts, desires, objects and knows various arts. But all of these are merely names. All of these are manifestations of the *brahman*.

The *brahman* is *hiranyagarbha*. He is the king of the gods. He is the great being. He is all the gods. He is the five elements of earth, wind, sky, water and energy. He is all the various types of living beings. He is all that is mobile and immobile, all that is born and unborn. He is herbs, trees, horses, cows, elephants, snakes and men. He is the beings that walk, he is the beings that fly in the sky. He is all that has no life. He imparts consciousness to everything, he is knowledge. It is knowledge that rules the universe. It is knowledge that is the refuge of the universe. Knowledge is the *brahman*.

Knowledge is in all the elements. And it is with the aid of knowledge that men can elevate themselves. Learned ones attain their desires. They

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overcome their senses and live in bliss and immortality.

This ends the *Aitareya Upanishad*. The *shanti patha* is as follows.

May my speech be established in my mind. May my mind be established in my speech. O *brahman*! You manifest yourself. Make yourself manifest to me. Bring to me the knowledge of the *Vedas*. May the wisdom that I have heard not desert me. May I be able to unite night and day through what I learn. I will think the truth. I will speak the truth. May the *brahman* protect me, and may the *brahman* protect my teacher. May I be protected, and may my teacher be protected. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

This too is oft quoted and the Sanskrit *shloka* is as follows:

oum vam me manasi pratishthita mano me vachi pratishthitam
aviraviram edhi
vedasya ma anisthah
shrutam me ma prahasih
anenadhitenahoratran samdadhami
ritam vadishyami satyam vadishyami
tanmamavatu tadvaktaramavatu
avatu mam avatu vaktaram avatu vaktaram
oum shantih shantih shantih.

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THE SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD

(The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* is a fairly short text, divided into six chapters or *adhyayas*. Chapter One has 16 *shlokas* (verses), Chapter Two 17, Chapter Three 21, Chapter Four 22, Chapter Five 14 and Chapter Six 23. The entire text thus has 113 verses. The central motif of this text is the development of the idea that the material world is an illusion (*maya*) and the theory of *yoga* (union between the *brahman* and the individual human soul or *atman*). The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* is unique in that it is the only *Upanishad* which derives its name from the name of the sage who composed it, Shvetashvatara. But the arguments advanced in the text are not always very consistent. This seems to suggests that, although the name is that of a single author, the authorship was actually multiple.

Adhyaya One

Those who were learned in the nature of the *brahman* began to say to one another, "O learned ones! Is the *brahman* the origin of the universe? How have we been created? Who makes us live and where are we established? Who controls our misery and our joy? It needs to be debated whether time, nature, fortune, inclination, or the elements, can be the origin of the universe. Obviously they cannot, because the *brahman* exists. Nor can the *atman* be the origin of the universe. The *atman* is influenced by the performance of good deeds and evil ones."

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Through their powers of meditation, the learned ones realised that the *brahman* is the origin of the universe. It is the unique *brahman* who presides over time and all living beings. The *brahman* is like the wheel of a chariot, with the illusions of the world (*maya*) forming the rim of the wheel. There are fifty spokes to the wheel of the *brahman*, as visualised by the learned ones.

(Two of the spokes are good deeds (*punya*) and evil ones (*papa*). Eight are the natural constituents of earth, water, fire, wind, sky, the mind, intelligence and vanity. Eight more spokes are skin, flesh, blood, fat, bones, marrow, energy and the epidermis. The gods Brahma, Prajapati, the *devas* or gods, the semi-divine species of *gandharvas* and *yakshas*, the demons (*rakshasas*), ancestors and ghosts (*pishachas*), form eight more spokes. The traits of pity, forgiveness, avoidance of jealousy, cleanliness, hard work, welfare, generosity and freedom from desire are an additional eight spokes. Eight more spokes are the mental states of righteousness, knowledge, disassociation from material possessions, prosperity, sin, ignorance, avarice and poverty. The final eight spokes are special powers, known as, *anima*, *mahima*, *laghima*, *prapti*, *prakamya*, *ishitva*, *vashitva* and *kamavasayitva*.)

We remember the *brahman* who is like a river. The five senses of knowledge are the currents of this river. The five senses of action are the ripples of this river. Living beings suffer from the illusion that they are distinct from the supreme *brahman*, the ruler of

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the universe. As long as they suffer from this illusion, they travel round and round along the wheel of the *brahman*. But once men realise that they are one with the *brahman*, they become immortal. It is the *brahman* who has been described in the *Vedanta*. He is constant and omnipresent. He is the object and the subject. He is the supreme godhead. Those who are learned, immerse themselves in the *brahman* and are freed from the cycle of birth.

All objects, transient and intransient, are the *brahman*. He holds up the universe. It is he who adopts the forms of living beings and becomes bound by the material world. But it is also he who frees himself from this bondage. In his various forms, the *brahman* is wise and ignorant, lord and master. He who realises that everything is the *brahman*, attains salvation. The *brahman* is constant and immortal. Once one realises, "I am the *brahman*", one is unified with the *brahman* and is freed from the illusions of the world.

When one knows the *brahman*, ignorance is banished and one is freed from the bondage of life and death. Unity with the *brahman* brings prosperity and bliss. Living beings, inanimate objects and the supreme godhead may seem to be three distinct entities. But in reality, all three are the *brahman*. This is the supreme knowledge. When a fire is lit with the help of wood, the true nature of the fire cannot be seen. Yet, the fire can be created by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Like the fire

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in the wood, the *brahman* is in the human body and can be realised.

The two pieces of wood that ignite the fire can be thought of as the physical body and the sacred syllable *oum*. The act of rubbing the two together is the act of meditation. When this is done, the radiant *brahman* is realised. Clarified butter is always present in milk, even if it cannot be seen. Like that, the *brahman* is everywhere and can be realised through truth and meditation. He who realises the *brahman*, realises him in one's own *atman*. The *brahman* is like oil in sesamum seeds, water in the ground, and clarified butter in milk.

Adhyaya Two

Before one can attain *yoga* (union) between the *atman* and the *brahman*, may the sun-god help us to control our minds and our senses. May the gods who rule over the senses enable us to control them. Through the grace of the sun-god, we will concentrate our minds on meditation. May the sun-god bless those who concentrate their minds and their senses on realising the supreme bliss that is the *brahman*. *Brahmanas* who seek to focus their minds on the *brahman*, pray to the sun-god as he is the driving force behind all action and sacrifices.

May the gods who are in heaven hear this praise of the sun-god. May this praise be glorified and may the sun-god help the process of concentration. If the blessings of the sun-god are not obtained, the mind gets distracted by the rituals of igniting fires,

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offering oblations and extracting *soma* juice at sacrifices. The *brahman* must be worshipped only after the blessings of the sun-god have been obtained. It is only then that the material world does not tie one down.

Before meditating, one must be seated in a proper posture, with the head and the neck straight and the chest elevated. The senses must be controlled with the aid of the mind and concentrated on the heart. The sacred syllable *oum* is the raft that will enable one to cross the ocean that is the world. One who is skilled in the art of meditation, controls his breath of life and his senses. Like a charioteer who controls unruly horses, such a person controls his mind and concentrates on the object of meditation.

Meditation must be attempted in a proper place. The place selected must be flat and pure and free from stones, fire or sand. It must be free from sound. It must not be an oft-frequented place like a pond or a temple. The place must be such that it brings placidity to the mind and does not hurt the eyes. For example, a cave that is free of winds is a good place to meditate on the *brahman*.

As one progresses along the path of meditation, one visualises snow, smoke, the sun, the wind, fire, fireflies, lightning, crystals and the moon. These are all manifestations of the *brahman*. They are indications that one is progressing along the right path. When earth, water, fire, the wind and the sky are collectively manifested, the fire of meditation

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purifies the worshipper and he is freed from the clutches of life and death.

Before the final stage of salvation, the body becomes light in weight. The mind and the body become free from disease and avarice. The body becomes radiant and fragrant and the voice becomes melodious. A lump of gold tainted by mud becomes pure when it is burnt in a fire. Like that, the worshipper is purified through the act of meditation and becomes one with the *brahman*. He is freed from all misery.

The heart becomes like a cave for the worshipper. In that cave, he visualises the *brahman* with the aid of a lamp that is his *atman*. He becomes learned and is freed from the cycle of life and death. The *brahman* is the origin of everything; he is there in the universe. It is he who is born as men and will continue to be born in the future. He is inside every living being. He is in fire, water, herbs, trees and the entire universe. We bow in obeisance before the *brahman*.

Adhyaya Three

Those who know the power of the *brahman* who rules over everything, are indeed immortal. It is the *brahman* who is the origin of all prosperity. The *brahman* is Rudra. It is he who creates, preserves and destroys. It is he who grants eyes, mouths, arms and feet to all living beings. It is he who creates heaven and earth. He is the one who presides over the universe and it is he who created the gods. May Rudra grant us wisdom.

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O Rudra! May your pure being ensure our welfare. May your arrows not bring us ill fortune. Please do not hate us or this world.

The *brahman* is in all the elements; the unique *brahman* is in all living beings. Those who know of the *brahman*, become immortal.

I know the being who is everywhere. He is his own light and he is beyond all ignorance. Those who know him, conquer death. There is no other path to salvation.

(The above *shloka* is often quoted. Therefore, the original Sanskrit is worthy of reproduction. It is as follows.)

vedahametam purusham mahantam adityavarnam

tamasah parastat

tameva viditvahati mrityumeti nanyah pantha

vidyatehayanaya.

There is nothing that is superior or inferior to him. There is nothing that is greater or smaller than him. His greatness permeates everything in the universe, like a gigantic tree. He is the origin of this universe, but he is much more than that. He has no form. Those who know this, are immortal. But those who do not know this, are doomed to misery.

He subsumes all the mouths and all the necks that there are. His omnipresent wealth is there in all the hearts. He is the manifestation of welfare. He is

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the great and powerful one. He is the omniscient fount of knowledge. He is constant and indestructible.

As a minute being, he is present in the hearts of all living beings. He can be realised through the mind and through intelligence. Those who know this, are immortal. Infinite is the number of his eyes, heads and feet. He pervades the universe. But in minute form, he is also present in the heart of every living being.

The *brahman* is the past, the present and the future. The *brahman* is the way to salvation. He is the nourisher of life. He is the hands, feet, eyes, heads and mouths of all living beings. He is there in the hearts of all living beings. He himself has no senses, yet he is manifest in the qualities of the senses. He is the supreme power, the supreme refuge and the supreme origin.

But it is the *brahman* who is also born as living beings and resides in physical bodies.

He has no hands or feet. Yet he moves and accepts objects. He has no eyes, and yet he sees. He has no ears, and yet he hears. He has no mind, and yet he knows. The wise ones know him to be the *brahman*. He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. He is free from all desire and is present in every heart. He is the supreme godhead who witnesses everything. He is the constant one who has no origin. He is the ancient one who does not decay. He is present everywhere. I know him to be the *brahman*.

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O Rudra! May your pure being ensure our welfare. May your arrows not bring us ill fortune. Please do not hate us or this world.

The *brahman* is in all the elements; the unique *brahman* is in all living beings. Those who know of the *brahman*, become immortal.

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the great and powerful one. He is the omniscient fount of knowledge. He is constant and indestructible.

As a minute being, he is present in the hearts of all living beings. He can be realised through the mind and through intelligence. Those who know this, are immortal. Infinite is the number of his eyes, heads and feet. He pervades the universe. But in minute form, he is also present in the heart of every living being.

The *brahman* is the past, the present and the future. The *brahman* is the way to salvation. He is the nourisher of life. He is the hands, feet, eyes, heads and mouths of all living beings. He is there in the hearts of all living beings. He himself has no senses, yet he is manifest in the qualities of the senses. He is the supreme power, the supreme refuge and the supreme origin.

But it is the *brahman* who is also born as living beings and resides in physical bodies.

He has no hands or feet. Yet he moves and accepts objects. He has no eyes, and yet he sees. He has no ears, and yet he hears. He has no mind, and yet he knows. The wise ones know him to be the *brahman*. He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. He is free from all desire and is present in every heart. He is the supreme godhead who witnesses everything. He is the constant one who has no origin. He is the ancient one who does not decay. He is present everywhere. I know him to be the *brahman*.

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Adhyaya Four

May the unique *brahman* grant us wisdom. At the time of creation, he creates diverse objects. At the time of preservation, the entire universe finds refuge in him. At the time of destruction, the entire universe merges into his being.

The *brahman* is the fire, the sun, the wind, the moon, the stars and the water. He is Hiranyagarbha, the creator. He is born and accepts different forms. He is man and woman, young and old. He is the blue bee, the green parrot, the cloud full of lightning and the seasons and the oceans. He has no origin and is present everywhere. It is from him that the universe was created.

There are two birds, similar to one another, who live on the same tree. One of the birds savours the varied fruit of the tree. The other one does not savour the fruit, but merely sees it.

(The two birds are the *brahman* and the *atman*. The world is like a tree. The *atman* savours the fruit of the worldly tree, but the *brahman* does not.)

The physical body is like a tree. Living beings occupy it and suffer the miseries of life. But those who attain the magnificence of the *brahman* through the powers of *yoga*, can overcome the bondage of the world.

The *brahman* is like a vast sky. In him are all the *Vedas* and all the gods. The *Vedas* serve no purpose for a person who does not know the *brahman*. It is only those who realise the *brahman*, that can attain

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bliss. Everything that is propounded in the *Vedas* originates from the *brahman*. It is through his powers of illusion (*maya*) that the *brahman* creates the universe. And living beings are tied down there through their ignorance. Know the world to be an illusion and know the *brahman* to be the creator of this *maya*. All the objects in the universe have the *brahman* in them.

It is the unrivalled *brahman* who is in nature. All that is there originates in him and merges into him at the time of destruction. Calmness comes when one visualises the great one who is deserving of all worship. He is the one who created the gods. He is the one who grants all prosperity. He is the great one who created Rudra and Hiranyagarbha. May the *brahman* grant us welfare.

The *brahman* is the lord of the gods. It is in him that all the worlds find refuge. He is the source of all bliss and he is the ruler of all bipeds and quadrupeds. Let us worship the *brahman* with our offerings. He is smaller than the smallest. He is the witness of all that goes on in the world. Many are his forms. And he is the omnipresent one who brings welfare. Know the *brahman* if you desire peace.

When the world was created, the *brahman* inserted himself in all living beings as a witness. It is in the *brahman* that all the sages and the gods are to be found. One who knows the *brahman* overcomes death and ignorance. Like the thin layer of cream that floats on clarified butter, the *brahman* pervades everything in the universe. One who knows this, is

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freed from all bondage. The great creator is present in the hearts of all living beings. He can be realised through meditation and wisdom. That is the path to immortality.

One who knows, is wise. To him, there is no distinction between night and day. He is pure and is beyond all senses. The learned ones know that it is the *brahman* who is revered by the sun-god. The *brahman* has no top, bottom or centre. He is everywhere. There is no metaphor which can satisfactorily describe the *brahman*.

The *brahman* cannot be comprehended through the senses. The eyes cannot see him. It is only through wisdom that one can realise the *brahman* in one's heart and become immortal. He is the one who has no birth or origin. We, who are a prey to birth and death, seek solace in him. O Rudra! Please protect me. Do not be angry and destroy our sons and grandsons. Protect our cows and our horses. Protect our servants. It is for our protection that we offer you oblations.

Adhyaya Five

Ignorance leads to worldly ties and wisdom leads to immortality. Both ignorance and wisdom are created by the *brahman*, but the *brahman* himself is neither wisdom nor ignorance. He controls everything. He controls all forms and their origins. At the time of creation, he instilled his wisdom in Hiranyagarbha, the creator. But he is himself neither wisdom nor ignorance.

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He is cause and effect. He is the web of illusion in which all living beings are immersed. He created all the senses, but he is above them all. The sun radiates light in all the directions. Like that, the rays of illusion emanate out of the *brahman*. The origin of the universe instils qualities in all objects. He controls the destinies of all objects.

It is this knowledge that is propounded in the *Upanishads*, the secret component of the *Vedas*. Gods and sages who have attained this knowledge have become immortal and merged with the *brahman*.

There are those who are concerned with the rituals of action and worship. These have their fruits and those who perform action and worship are rewarded with the fruits. But they continue to circle in the cycle of birth and death.

The radiant being is present in the heart in a minute form. Split a hair into a hundred parts. Split a hundreth part into another hundred parts. That is the size of this minute being. But he is also the infinite. He is neither man, nor woman. While he is present in a body, he accepts the ego of that particular body.

Food and drink add to the body. Similarly, good and evil deeds contribute to the store of merit that one has. Depending on this, a living being is born again in various worlds. Depending on one's qualities, one may also inherit the wisdom from an earlier life. But this cycle of birth and death is an illusion. He who knows the radiant *brahman*, is

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freed from all bondage. He is the pure one who has no body. He is the creator of all living beings. He is the harbinger of all welfare. One who knows him is freed from the cycle of birth and death.

Adhyaya Six

There are those who find the origin of the universe in material causes. There are those who trace the origin of the universe to time. But the *brahman* is the creator. The *brahman's* wheel goes round and round. He pervades everything and sees all that there is to see. He is the wise one who is the creator of time. He is the pure one. It is from him that the forms of the earth, the water, the fire, the wind and the sky originate. It is on these aspects that the wise ones meditate.

Action must be performed for the sake of the *brahman*. One must seek to unite oneself with the *brahman* in this life, or in subsequent ones. That is the road to salvation. He who realises the unity between one's own self and everything in the universe, overcomes worldly bondage. Nature and the elements no longer have any relevance for him. He transcends all action and the fruits of such action.

The *brahman* is the supreme origin. He is the cause of good deeds and evil ones. He is more than the past, the present and the future. He is truth itself. He is beyond time and beyond the world. He is the immortal one who sustains the universe. He is wisdom and intelligence. Worship him thus.

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He is the lord of all the gods. We know him to be the radiant one. He has no body or senses. Yet, there is nothing that is superior to him. It is known that he is the creator of all illusion. It is known that he is wisdom itself. He has no lord, nor can anything control him. He is the origin. But he himself has no origin. Like a web emanating from a spider, the universe and its forms and action, emanate out of the *brahman*. May the *brahman* help us to seek union with him.

He is the radiant one who is present in all living beings. He is the omnipresent one. He is the one who is present in all elements and all senses. But he himself has no qualities. He is the unique one. But he divides that unique seed into many forms. Those who realise the *brahman* attain immortal bliss, not others. He is present in all objects and in all senses. He is the origin. If one realises the supreme one through *yoga*, all bondage disappears.

The sun does not make him manifest, nor do the moon or the stars. The lightning manifests him not and there is no question of fire making him manifest. He is the radiant one and it is from him that everything else obtains its radiance. It is from his energy that various forms become manifest.

(This *shloka* is often quoted and we reproduce the original Sanskrit. This is as follows.)

na tatra suryo bhati na chandratarakam nema vidyuto

bhanti kutohayamagnih

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tameva bhantamanubhati sarvam tasya bhasa

sarvamidam vibhati.

The *brahman* is the only one in this universe. He is in the fire and in the water. It is through knowing him that one becomes immortal. There is no other way. He rules over sentient and insentient objects. He is the one who frees one from the world. He is the omniscient creator, the supreme origin. He presides over time. He is the immortal one who is the road to salvation. He presides over this universe. There is no one else.

At the beginning of creation, he created Hiranyagarbha. He is the origin of the *Vedas*. For the sake of salvation, I seek refuge in the radiant one. It is impossible for man to cover the entire sky. Like that, it is impossible to attain salvation without seeking refuge in the *brahman*.

Through his powers of meditation, the sage Shvetashvatara realised the *brahman*. He divulged this divine knowledge to a group of sages. It is this knowledge that is revealed by the *Upanishads*. This knowledge should not be disclosed to one who is not a son or a disciple, or to one who does not have placidity of temperament. This wisdom can be appreciated by a person who reveres the *brahman* and respects his teacher.

Thus ends the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*.

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THE CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

(The *Chandogya Upanishad* is fairly long. In fact, it is the longest *Upanishad* after the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The text is divided into eight chapters (*adhyaya*). Each chapter is virtually independent. This suggests that the chapterisation came much later and that a lot of loose and floating material was brought together as a single *Upanishad*. Each chapter is subdivided into sections or *khandas*. Chapter One has 103 verses, Chapter Two has 82, Chapter Three has 98, Chapter Four has 78, Chapter Five has 87, Chapter Six has 69, Chapter seven has 51 and Chapter eight has 62. There are thus 630 verses in the entire *Chandogya Upanishad*. The most interesting motif in this text is the development of the idea of transmigration of souls.)

Adhyaya One

The syllable *oum* must be worshipped. *Oum* stands for the *brahman*. It is for this reason that *oum* is there at the beginning of every incantation.

The earth constitutes the essence of the elements, water constitutes the essence of the earth, the herbs are the essence of water, the human body constitutes the essence of the herbs, speech constitutes the essence of the human body, the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* are the essence of speech, the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* are the essence of the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, and *oum* constitutes the essence of the hymns of the *Sama Veda*.

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(It must not be forgotten that the *Chandogya Upanishad* is associated with the *Sama Veda*.)

Oum is the most sacred of all essences, standing for the *brahman*. Speech is manifest in the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the life force is manifest in the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The syllable *oum* signifies the union of the two. The syllable *oum* is the essence of the hymns. One who worships the syllable *oum* thus, obtains all the objects of his desire. One who knows the syllable *oum* to be the source of all prosperity, obtains all the objects of his desire.

It is with the incantation of *oum* that the rites prescribed in the *Vedas* are begun. It is with *oum* that incantations and hymns are chanted. Sacrifices performed to the chanting of the syllable *oum* attain the sun-god. They then become rain and the rain becomes foodgrains. Foodgrains sustain the breath of life. It is thus that *oum* is nothing but the breath of life.

There are those who know the glory of *oum* and there are those who do not. Both classes of people perform action and worship and obtain the resultant fruits. But the fruits obtained by those who know the glory of *oum* are greater. Such is the wonderful nature of the syllable *oum*.

The gods and the demons were both offspring of Prajapati. Many years ago, the gods and the demons fought among themselves. In their fight with the demons, the gods enlisted the support of the god of hymns.

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The gods elected the power of speech as a chorister and the demons attacked the power of speech with their sins. It is for this reason that men utter the truth, as well as falsehood. The gods elected the power of smell as a chorister and the demons attacked the power of smell with their sins. It is for this reason that there are both good smells and bad ones. The gods elected the power of sight as a chorister and the demons attacked the power of sight with their sins. It is for this reason that men see both beautiful sights and ugly ones. The gods elected the power of hearing as a chorister and the demons attacked the power of hearing with their sins. It is for this reason that men hear both pleasant and unpleasant sounds. The gods elected the mind as a chorister and the demons attacked the mind with their sins. It is for this reason that both good and evil thoughts frequent the minds of men. Finally, the gods elected the breath of life as a chorister. And the demons were decimated as soon as they came into contact with the breath of life, just as a brick is crushed by a boulder. The breath of life is like solid stone; it crushes those who perform evil deeds or exhibit hatred.

The breath of life is itself untouched by good deeds or evil ones. It is through the breath of life that the other senses are nurtured. The sages Angira, Brihaspati, Ayasya and Vaka worshipped the breath of life as a chorister. It was for this reason that these sages came to be revered by all the other sages who lived in the *naimisha* forest. He who

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knows the qualities of the breath of life, obtains all the objects of his desire.

Savita is the sun-god and he must be worshipped as a chorister. He is the one who banishes fear and darkness. Savita is identical with the breath of life. Both bring warmth. Speech symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and *sama* hymns are identical with the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*.

The word hymn (*udgitha*) has three syllables, *ut*, *gi* and *tha*. These three syllables must be separately revered. *Ut* symbolises the breath of life, *gi* too symbolises the breath of life, and *tha* symbolises foodgrains. *Ut* symbolises heaven, *gi* symbolises the sky, and *tha* symbolises the earth. *Ut* symbolises the *Sama Veda*, *gi* symbolises the *Yajur Veda*, and *tha* symbolises the *Rig Veda*. A person who worships these three syllables, always possesses an abundance of foodgrains.

Meditate on the hymn that is to be chanted. Meditate on the god who is being worshipped. Meditate on the metre in which, the hymn is being chanted. Meditate on the direction facing which, the hymn is being chanted. Such meditation leads to the desired fruits.

The gods resorted to hymns and metres to protect themselves from death. The first part of any incantation consists of the word *oum*. The gods uttered this sacred word and were freed from the clutches of death. He who worships *oum*, is freed from all fear and becomes immortal.

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The word *oum* is known as *pranava*. *Oum* symbolises all hymns, the sun utters *oum* as it traverses the sky. Many years ago, the sage Koushitaki worshipped *oum* and obtained a son. He advised his son to worship *oum* so that he might have many sons. The breath of life utters *oum* as it courses through the body. He who realises the wonderful nature of *oum*, obtains all the objects of his desire.

The earth symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and fire symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. Fire is established in earth, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. The atmosphere symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the wind symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The wind is established in the atmosphere, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. Heaven symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the sun symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The sun is established in heaven, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. The stars symbolise the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the moon symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The moon is established in the stars, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*.

The white light of the sun symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*. And the bluish-dark light of the sun symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. There is a golden and radiant being who can be seen in the interior of the sun. His beard, hair and nails are all golden. His eyes are as red as a red lotus. He is the god who frees one from all sin and he is the god who

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stands for all hymns. He also symbolises the chorister. This is the being who rules over all the worlds and all the gods.

The power of speech symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the power of smell symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The power of smell is established in the power of speech, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. The eyes symbolise the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the reflections in the eyes symbolise the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The reflections are established in the eyes, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. The ears symbolise the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the mind symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The mind is established in the ears, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*.

The white hue of the eyes symbolises the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* and the black hue of the eyes symbolises the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The black hue is established in the white hue, just as *sama* hymns are established in the *Rig Veda*. A being can be seen in the eyes. He is the same as the being in the sun. He constitutes the three *Vedas*, the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*.

People worship both the being in the sun and the being in the eyes. The being in the sun is the lord of the worlds above, and the being in the eyes is the lord of the worlds below.

Many years ago, there were three people well-versed in the nature of hymns. The first was a *brahmana* named Shilaka, the son of Shalavat. The

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second was a *brahmana* named Chaikitayana, descended from the sage Dalbhya. (The *brahmanas* were a class of priests and scholars.) And the third was a *kshatriya* king named Pravahana, the son of Jivala. (The *kshatriyas* were a class of warriors and rulers.)

These three decided to discuss the nature of hymns.

"Why don't the two of you discuss first?" said Pravahana. "I wish to hear what you have to say."

"Where do *sama* hymns find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"In the voice," replied Chaikitayana.

"Where does the voice find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"In the breath of life," replied Chaikitayana.

"Where does the breath of life find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"In foodgrains," replied Chaikitayana.

"Where do foodgrains find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"In water," replied Chaikitayana.

"Where does water find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"In heaven," replied Chaikitayana.

"Where does heaven find refuge?" asked Shilaka.

"There is no refuge beyond heaven," replied Chaikitayana. "*Sama* hymns cannot go beyond

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heaven. *Sama* hymns are established in heaven and the *Sama Veda* is worshipped as heaven."

"I am afraid that your answers have not been at all satisfactory" said Shilaka. "You have said that *sama* hymns find their last refuge in heaven and this leaves them unestablished."

"Let me ask you then," retorted Chaikitayana.

"Tell me, where do *sama* hymns find refuge?"

"In the earth," replied Shilaka.

"Where does the earth find refuge?" asked Chaikitayana.

"There is no other refuge," replied Shilaka. "The earth is the refuge of all the elements and there is no other place that *sama* hymns can go to. *Sama* hymns are established on earth and the *Sama Veda* is worshipped as the earth."

"I am afraid that your answers have not been at all satisfactory," said Pravahana. "You have said that *sama* hymns find their last refuge on earth and this leaves them unestablished. They cannot then become infinite."

"Let me ask you then," retorted Shilaka. "Tell me, where do *sama* hymns find refuge?"

"In the sky," replied Pravahana. "All the elements originate in the sky and merge into the sky at the time of destruction. The sky is the greatest entity that there is. *Sama* hymns are established in the sky and this makes them infinite. He who worships *sama* hymns thus, obtains the best of worlds."

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The sage Atidhanva Shounaka had instructed his disciple Udarashandilya about the virtues of *sama* hymns. He had told him that as long as Udarashandilya's descendants knew of the virtues of *sama* hymns, their lives and after-lives would keep getting better and better.

There was a sage named Ushasti. He was the son of the sage Chakra. Ushasti lived in the kingdom of Kuru. Once upon a time, a hail storm destroyed all the crops in the land of Kuru. Ushasti and his wife had to go elsewhere in search of food. Husband and wife found refuge in a village populated by the tenders of elephants.

Ushasti was very hungry. He went to a villager and begged for some food to eat.

"I have been eating from this vessel," replied the villager. "There is some meat left. But it is polluted because I have been eating from the vessel. Unfortunately, I have nothing else."

"Give it to me," said Ushasti.

"You can also have this water," replied the villager. "I have been drinking from the glass, but that doesn't seem to bother you."

"I do not want the water," said Ushasti. "You have been drinking from the glass and the water is polluted. The meat was also polluted, but I was hungry and couldn't wait. As for the water, I can go and find water somewhere else."

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Some meat was still left and Ushasti took it home to his wife. But since there was some food at home, Ushasti's wife did not eat the meat. She kept it aside.

Next morning, Ushasti got up, still bothered about finding food. There was a king who was conducting a sacrifice and Ushasti hoped to be appointed the chief priest. As chief priest, he would receive food and gifts. Having partaken of the leftover meat, Ushasti headed for the place where the sacrifice was being held.

He went to the choristers and said, "Do you know about the god to whom you are chanting hymns? Be warned. Because if you do not, your heads are going to fall off."

Hearing this, the king asked, "Who are you? Will you tell me your name?"

"I am Ushasti, the son of Chakra," replied the sage.

"I have been looking for you," said the king. "I wished to appoint you the chief priest. But since I was unable to find you, I had to select these others."

The king also promised Ushasti plenty of riches.

"But what about the gods?" asked the other choristers. "Please tell us who they are."

"The breath of life is the god to whom hymns are chanted," replied Ushasti. "The breath of life expresses the elements and it is from the breath of

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life that the elements originate. The sun is the god to whom hymns are chanted. It is to the sun that the elements pray. The foodgrains are the god to whom hymns are chanted. It is because of foodgrains that life is nourished."

The sage Dalbhya and his wife Mitra had a son. This son was also a sage and had two names, Vaka and Glava. Vaka left his village to study the *Vedas*.

A white dog suddenly appeared in front of Vaka. (This white dog was obviously a god or a sage who had arrived to help Vaka.) Other dogs also appeared and surrounded the white dog. (These other dogs were other gods.)

"Please sing so that we may obtain foodgrains," said the other dogs. "We are hungry."

"Tomorrow morning, we will sing in front of Vaka," replied the white dog.

Next morning, the dogs began to sing. They sang of the glory of *oum*; they prayed to the sun-god.

(Much is left unsaid. But it is implicitly clear that Vaka learnt these hymns from the dogs.)

Adhyaya Two

That which is superior is *sama* and that which is inferior is *asama*. (*Asama* connotes the negation of *sama*.) The best form of worship is one where *sama* hymns are chanted. Proximity to *sama* signifies all that is righteous. And distance from *sama* signifies

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all that is evil. The learned ones worship *sama* hymns and attain all the objects of their desire.

Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in the earth, the fire, the sky and the sun. He who worships five types of *sama* hymns, attains all the worlds. Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in the wind that blows from the east, in the clouds, in the rain, in the lightning and in the thunder. Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in the clouds, in the rain, in the rivers that flow to the east, in the rivers that flow to the west, and in the ocean.

Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in the spring, the summer, the monsoon, the early autumn and the late autumn. Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in goats, buffaloes, cows, horses and men. Five types of *sama* hymns are to be worshipped in the powers of smell, speech, sight, hearing and thought.

Sama means that which is the same everywhere. Since the sun shines everywhere equally, the sun should be worshipped as *sama* hymns. It is in the sun that all the elements find their refuge. Five types of *sama* hymns should be worshipped in the fire, in the lighting of the fire, in the smoke, in the flames, in the sparks, and in the process of the fire going out. He who worships *sama* hymns thus, attains fame, sons and animals.

Five types of *sama* hymns should be worshipped in the earth, the atmosphere, heaven, the directions

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and the ocean. Five types of *sama* hymns should be worshipped in the body-hair, the skin, the flesh, the bones and the marrow. Five types of *sama* hymns must be worshipped in the fire, the wind, the sun, the stars and the moon. He who worships *sama* hymns thus, obtains all the objects of his desire.

Righteous deeds have three components. Performing sacrifices, studying and giving alms constitute the first strand. Meditation is the second strand. Studying in the house of one's teacher is the third strand. All such righteous people are destined for the most sacred of worlds. But he who worships the *brahman* becomes immortal.

(This is a reference to the four stages of life (*ashrama*). The first is that of celibate studenthood (*brahmacharya*), when one studies at the house of one's teacher. The second is the householder stage (*garhasthya*), when one performs sacrifices, studies the *Vedas* and gives alms. The third is the forest-dwelling stage (*vanaprastha*), when one retires to the forest and meditates. And the fourth and final stage is that of becoming a hermit (*sannyasa*), when one contemplates the *brahman*.)

Having created the worlds, Prajapati meditated on them and the *Vedas* emerged. It is from the *Vedas* that the syllables *bhur*, *bhuvah* and *svar* originated. (*Bhur* is the earth, *bhuvah* is the atmosphere and *svar* is heaven.) Prajapati meditated on these syllables and the sacred word *oum* emerged. Like the veins of a leaf knit together the rest of the leaf, *oum* knits together all sounds. *Oum* is everything. *Oum* is everything.

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The learned ones say that the first *savana* is reserved for the eight Vasus, the second *savana* is reserved for the eleven Rudras, and the third *savana* is reserved for the twelve Adityas and the Vishvadevas. How can one performing a sacrifice then find a world for himself?

(The day of the sacrifice was divided into three parts, each known as a *savana*. The Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas and the Vishvadevas were classes of gods. During the first *savana* the Vasus controlled the earth; during the second *savana* the Rudras controlled the atmosphere and during the third *savana* the Adityas and the Vishvadevas controlled heaven. There was thus no other world that was left.)

The person performing the sacrifice will sit behind the sacrificial fire, with his face towards the north. He will chant hymns to the Vasus. He will say, "O Agni! Open up the doors so that I may attain the earth. May I be able to see you so that I may attain the earth. I salute the fire who is in the earth. May I be able to return to earth after I die." The Vasus then grant the earth to the person performing the sacrifice.

The person performing the sacrifice will sit behind the sacrificial fire, with his face towards the north, and chant hymns to the Rudras. He will say, "O Agni! Open up the doors so that I may attain the atmosphere. May I be able to see you, so that I may attain the atmosphere. I salute the fire who is in the atmosphere. May I be able to go to the atmosphere

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after I die." The Rudras then grant the atmosphere to the person performing the sacrifice.

The person performing the sacrifice will sit behind the sacrificial fire, with his face towards the north. He will chant hymns to the Adityas and the Vishvadevas. He will say, "O Agni! Open up the doors so that I may attain heaven. May I be able to see you, so that I may attain the kingdom of heaven. I salute the fire who is in heaven. May I be able to go to heaven after I die." The Adityas and the Vishvadevas then grant heaven to the person performing the sacrifice.

Adhyaya Three

The sun is mead for the gods. (The word used is *madhu* and we have translated this as mead or a mixture of water and honey. Neither honey nor nectar seem to be very satisfactory, although the imagery of a honey-comb is used.)

Heaven is the centre of the honey-comb and the atmosphere is the honey-comb itself. The water in the sun's rays are the young bees.

The rays of the sun that radiate out towards the east are like the eastern hole in the honey-comb. The *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* are the honey-bees, and the rites prescribed in the *Rig Veda* are the flowers from which nectar is gathered. The fruits of the prescribed action are the juices from which honey is made. It is from these juices that all sorts of desirable objects are obtained. The juices percolate

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through to the eastern part of the sun and make the sun red-tinged.

The rays of the sun that radiate out towards the south are like the southern hole in the honey-comb. The *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda* are the honey-bees, and the rites prescribed in the *Yajur Veda* are the flowers from which nectar is gathered. The fruits of the prescribed action are the juices from which honey is made. It is from these juices that all sorts of desirable objects are obtained. The juices percolate through to the southern part of the sun and make the sun white-tinged.

The rays of the sun that radiate out towards the west are like the western hole in the honey-comb. The *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* are the honey-bees, and the rites prescribed in the *Sama Veda* are the flowers from which nectar is gathered. The fruits of the prescribed action are the juices from which honey is made. It is from these juices that all sorts of desirable objects are obtained. The juices percolate through to the western part of the sun and make the sun black-tinged.

The rays of the sun that radiate out towards the north are like the northern hole in the honey-comb. The *mantras* of the *Atharva Veda* are the honey-bees, and the rites prescribed in the *Atharva Veda* are the flowers from which nectar is gathered. The fruits of the prescribed action are the juices from which honey is made. It is from these juices that all sorts of desirable objects are obtained. The juices percolate through to the northern part of the sun and make the sun grey-tinged.

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The rays of the sun that radiate out towards the top are like the upper hole in the honey-comb. Secret rites are the honey-bees; the *pranava mantra* is the flower from which nectar is gathered. The juice of this flower is immortality. It is from this juice that all sorts of desirable objects are obtained. The juice percolates through to the upper part of the sun and makes the sun's rays swift and fickle.

The heavenly nectar (*amrita*) has many forms. The first form is red in colour. This is partaken of by Agni and the Vasus. The other gods do not savour it; they are content merely to see this *amrita*. He who knows the nature of this *amrita*, becomes one with the Vasus and is satiated. As long as the sun rises and sets, such a learned one rules like the Vasus.

The second form of *amrita* is white in colour. This is partaken of by Indra and the Rudras. The other gods do not savour it; they are content merely to realise it with their senses. He who knows the nature of this *amrita*, becomes one with the Rudras and is satiated. As long as the sun rises and sets, such a learned one rules like the Rudras.

The third form of *amrita* is black in colour. This is partaken of by Varuna and the Adityas. The other gods do not savour it; they are content merely to realise it through their senses. He who knows the nature of this *amrita*, becomes one with the Adityas and is satiated. As long as the sun rises and sets, such a learned one rules like the Adityas.

The fourth form of *amrita* is dark black in colour. This is partaken of by Soma and the Maruts. The

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other gods do not savour it; they are content merely to realise it through their senses. He who knows the nature of this *amrita*, becomes one with the Maruts and is satiated. As long as the sun rises and sets, such a learned one rules like the Maruts.

The fifth form of *amrita* is swift and fickle like the rays of the sun. This is partaken of by the *pranava mantra* and the Sadhyas. The other gods do not savour it; they are content merely to realise it through their senses. He who knows the nature of this *amrita*, becomes one with the Sadhyas and is satiated. As long as the sun rises and sets, such a learned one rules like the Sadhyas.

When the appointed time for living beings is over, the sun ceases to rise and set. He resides only in himself. In the world of the *brahman*, the sun does not rise or set. This is indeed the truth. For one who has realised the *brahman*, there is no question of the sun rising or setting. For him, the light of the day is perpetual.

This is the secret knowledge that Hiranayagarbha related to Virat and Virat related to Manu. From Manu, the knowledge passed on to Ikshvaku and his descendants. The sage Uddalaka revealed this knowledge to his son Aruni. Other fathers also teach this learning to their eldest sons or to worthy disciples. There is no one else to whom this knowledge can be revealed. Granting this knowledge is superior to granting the entire world with all its riches.

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All living beings are manifestations of the *gayatri mantra*. Speech is the *gayatri* mantra. Speech sings the names of living beings and frees them from fear. It is for this reason that speech is the *gayatri mantra*.

(This is not at all clear. *Trayate* means to free from fear and the word *gayati* means to sing. The idea is that speech calls living beings by their names and frees them from fear. Hence the derivation of the word *gayatri*. The *gayatri* is a metre and is the most important of the metres used in the *Vedas*. The other major metres are *ushnika*, *anushtupa*, *vrihati*, *trishtupa* and *jagati*. The *gayatri* has four segments and each segment has six letters. There are thus 24 letters in all. Each segment of the *ushnika* has 7 letters, each of the *anushtupa* 8 letters, of the *vrihati* 9 letters, of the *trishtupa* 11 letters and of the *jagati* 12 letters.)

The *gayatri* is like the earth. Just as all the elements find their refuge in the earth, they also find their refuge in the *gayatri mantra*.

(There follow several more verses on the *gayatri mantra*. These are not particularly interesting and these we will skip.)

The *brahman* is there in the sky and the *brahman* is there in the heart. The sky is like the heart. The heart has five gates, each of which is protected by the gods. The eastern gate is protected by the breath of life. The breath of life is the same as the sun-god, Aditya. Aditya is the *brahman* who is worshipped as energy. This is the *brahman* who is the origin of

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foodgrains. He who worships the *brahman* in this fashion, becomes radiant and full of spirit.

The southern gate of the heart is also protected by the breath of life. This breath of life is the same as the moon-god, Chandrama. Chandrama is the *brahman* who is worshipped as fame. He who worships the *brahman* in this fashion, becomes famous.

The western gate of the heart is also protected by the breath of life. This breath of life is the same as the fire-god, Agni. Agni is the *brahman* who is worshipped as energy. This is the *brahman* who is the origin of foodgrains. He who worships the *brahman* in this fashion, becomes radiant and full of spirit.

The northern gate of the heart is also protected by the breath of life. This breath of life is the same as the rain-god, Parjanya, or Varuna, the god of the oceans. Parjanya and Varuna are the *brahman* who is worshipped as the granter of great deeds and a handsome appearance. He who worships the *brahman* in this fashion, is handsome and performs great deeds.

The upper gate of the heart is also protected by the breath of life. This breath of life is the sky and the wind-god, Vayu. Vayu is the *brahman* who is worshipped as greatness. He who worships the *brahman* in this fashion, becomes great.

These five gods, who preside over the five gates of the heart, are known as the guardians of heaven.

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Those who worship the *brahman* in the form of these five gods, have valiant sons and attain heaven.

The universe is the *brahman*. It is from the *brahman* that the universe originates. Again at the time of destruction, it is into the *brahman* that the universe merges. Since everything is the *brahman*, one should not fall prey to emotions and should worship the *brahman* with placidity. One's deeds in this life get reflected in one's fortune in the after-life. Therefore, it is the *brahman* who should be worshipped with all concentration.

The *brahman* is everywhere in the universe and is free from all emotions. The *brahman* is in the sky. He is truth itself. The *brahman* presides over all action and all the elements. The mind is his resolution and the senses are his form. It is the *brahman* who is present in all living beings in minute form.

The *brahman* is in the heart as the *atman*. He is smaller than a grain of cereal. But he is also greater than the sky, the atmosphere or heaven.

The *atman* is the *brahman* and, after death, one unites with the *brahman*. He who realises this, becomes one with the supreme godhead. This is the truth that was propounded by the sage Shandilya.

The universe is never destroyed. The atmosphere is its stomach, the heaven its face. The earth constitutes the lower parts. The various directions are the angles of the universe. The universe is the store-house of a myriad jewels.

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(There is a seeming contradiction. The universe does not last for ever and is destroyed. The universe lasts for one of Brahma's days. This is a very long period of time. In relative terms, from the perspective of men, it can therefore be stated that the universe is never destroyed.)

The eastern direction of the universe is *juhu*, the southern direction *sahamana*. The western direction is *rajni* and the northern direction is *subhuta*. (In the course of a sacrifice, four wooden ladles were used and these were known as *dhruva*, *upabhrit*, *juhu* and *sruk*. This is a reference to these ladles, although the identification is not very clear.) The wind is like the calf of the northern direction. He who knows this, never has to weep on account of his son. He does not have to experience the death of his son.

(Specific *mantras* addressed to heaven, the atmosphere, the earth and the breath of life follow.)

Man is like a sacrifice. The first twenty-four years of his life are like the first *savana*. (A sacrifice was divided into three time periods, each known as a *savana*.) The *gayatri mantra* has twenty-four letters and the *gayatri mantra* is used to chant hymns during the first *savana*. The Vasus are the gods who preside over the first *savana*. The breath of life is the Vasus and the Vasus establish all the elements. (The word *vasayanti* means 'to establish' and it is from this word that the Vasus obtain their name.) If a person suffers from disease during the first

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twenty-four years of his life, it is to the Vasus that he should pray. He will be cured.

The next forty-four years of a man's life are like the second *savana*. The *trishtupa* metre is used to chant hymns during the second *savana*. (The *trishtupa* metre has forty-four letters.) The Rudras are the gods who preside over the second *savana*. The breath of life constitutes the Rudras and the Rudras make all the elements cry. (The word *rud* means to cry and it is from this word that the Rudras obtain their name. The interpretation is that, these forty-four years of one's life are exceedingly cruel. The external world becomes cruel vis-a-vis the man and the man himself resorts to cruelty. Hence the connection with crying.) If a person suffers from disease during the next forty-four years of his life, it is to the Rudras that he should pray. He will be cured.

The final forty-eight years of a man's life are like the third *savana*. The *jagati* metre is used to chant hymns during the third *savana*. (The *jagati* metre has forty-eight letters.) The Adityas are the gods who preside over the third *savana*. The breath of life is the Adityas and the Adityas accept all the elements. (The word *adadate* means 'to accept' and the Adityas derive their name from this.) If a person suffers from disease during these forty-eight years of his life, it is to the Adityas that he should pray. He will be cured.

There was a sage named Mahidasa. He was the son of Itara. Mahidasa learnt all this and said, "O

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Death! Your attempts to harm me are futile. I know that I will not die."

(This probably means that Mahidasa would not die before his appointed time and is not a reference to the *atman* being immortal.)

Mahidasa lived for one hundred and sixteen years. He who knows this secret knowledge, will also be of good health and live for one hundred and sixteen years.

The hunger and thirst that one experiences in life are like the initiation to a sacrifice.

(The analogy between a man's life and a sacrifice continues. In the process of initiation, one has to fast. This is being compared to the unhappiness that one has to face in life.)

The food and drink that follows the process of initiation can be compared to the happiness that one faces in life.

The happiness that comes subsequently in life can be compared to the hymns that are chanted at sacrifices.

Meditation, truthfulness and non-violence are like the alms given at sacrifices.

Man is like a sacrifice. The mother who gives him birth, pours *soma* juices on him. The pouring of *soma* juice symbolises a man's birth. And the act of bathing after a sacrifice is over, symbolises death.

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The sage Angirasa Ghora passed on this knowledge to Krishna, the son of Devaki. He taught his disciple the sacred *mantras*.

(This disciple does not seem to have been the famous Yadava Krishna. The famous Krishna's teacher was the sage Sandipani, not Angirasa Ghora.)

The *brahman* is pure radiance. Like the daylight, he is everywhere. The *brahman* is the origin of the universe. Those who know about the *brahman*, visualise this radiance everywhere. They visualise it in their hearts and in the sun. The radiance of the *brahman* surpasses the radiance of the gods.

The mind and the sky must be worshipped as the *brahman*. The powers of speech, hearing, smell and sight are all parts of the *brahman* who is in the mind. Fire, wind, the sun and the directions are all parts of the *brahman* who is in the sky. The power of speech is ignited with the power of fire. He who knows this, attains fame and energy. The power of smell obtains its force from the wind. He who knows this, attains fame and energy. The power of sight is energised by the sun. He who knows this, attains fame and energy. The power of hearing obtains its force from the directions. He who knows this, attains fame and energy.

The sun is the *brahman*. Prior to creation, there was untruth everywhere. After creation, truth prevailed. The universe was created and it was in the form of an egg (*anda*). For an entire year, the universe stayed in the form of an egg. Thereafter, it

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split into two parts. One half was golden and the other half was silvery.

The silvery part became the earth. The golden part became heaven. The womb became the mountains and the veins (of the embryo) became the rivers.

The sun was born from the egg. As soon as he was born, he was acclaimed. The elements and the objects of desire were created. Every day, when the sun rises, he is acclaimed and the elements and the objects of desire are created afresh.

He who worships the sun as the *brahman*, attains a state of bliss.

Adhyaya Four

There was a person named Janashruti. He was so named because he was the grandson of Janashruta.

Janashruti gave a lot of alms. He cooked food so that he might offer it to his guests. He built guest-houses in every direction.

(Although not explicitly stated, Janashruti was a king. In what follows, the gods and the sages appear before Janashruti in the form of geese.)

One night, geese flew over Janashruti's palace. A goose at the back told a goose in front, "O goose! Do you not have any eyes? Janashruti's radiance extends right upto heaven. Be careful. Do not get too close as it will burn you to ashes."

The goose in front replied, "Do not use such an expression to describe Janashruti. Such

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expressions, in my view, should only be used to describe the cart-owner Raikva."

"Who is Raikva?" asked the goose at the back.

"If you throw a die, *krita* surpasses everything else," replied the goose in front. "Like that, no one can surpass Raikva's deeds. Raikva's knowledge surpasses the knowledge that all others may have."

(A die was used for gambling and had six sides. Two of the sides were blank. The remaining four sides had spots, four, three, two and one in number. The side with four spots was known as *krita*, the side with three as *treta*, the side with two as *dvapara*, and the side with one spot was known as *kali*. *Krita* won over all the others. In this sense, *krita* surpasses everything else.)

Janashruti heard this conversation. Next morning, he called his son to him and said, "Do you think that I am like Raikva?"

"Who is Raikva?" asked the son.

"If you throw a die, *krita* surpasses everything else." replied Janashruti. "Like that, no one can surpass Raikva's deeds. Raikva's knowledge surpasses the knowledge that all others may have."

The son went to look for Raikva, but could not find him anywhere.

"Raikva is learned in the knowledge of the *brahman*," Janashruti told his son. "Go and look in a place where you might find such a person."

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In his travels, the son encountered a man who was seated next to a cart. The man was busy scratching himself.

"Are you Raikva?" asked the son.

"Indeed, I am," was the reply.

The son returned and told Janashruti that he had found Raikva. Immediately, Janashruti went to Raikva with six hundred cows, many necklaces, and many horses and chariots. "Please accept these riches," said the king. "But tell me about the god you worship."

"You are an idiot," replied Raikva. "Take these riches away."

The king returned with one thousand cows, many more necklaces, and many more horses and chariots. He also brought his daughter along with him. "Please accept all these," said Janashruti. "But instruct me."

Realising that a princess could not be refused, Raikva resolved to instruct the king. Janashruti also gave Raikva the village he lived in. This village is known as Raikvaparna and is in the land of Mahavrisha.

This is what Raikva had to say.

The wind must be worshipped as a god who possesses every quality. When the fire goes out, it is into the wind that the fire merges. When the moon sets, it is into the wind that the moon merges.

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When water dries up, it is into the wind that water merges. This is what the gods have to say about the wind.

In the body, the breath of life must be worshipped as the god who possesses every quality. When a man sleeps, the powers of speech, sight, hearing and thinking merge into the breath of life.

The wind-god, Vayu, is supreme among the gods and the breath of life is supreme among the senses.

Once, the sages Shounaka and Abhipratari were eating. A celibate mendicant arrived there and begged for some food. Wishing to test the mendicant, the sages refused to give him any food.

"The *brahman* is the lord of the universe," said the mendicant. "Those who dwell on earth, fail to realise him. O Shounaka and O Abhipratari! The *brahman* is the breath of life and I am the *brahman*. All food is destined for the *brahman*. You have refused him that which is his own."

"The *brahman* is indeed the origin of the universe," replied Shounaka. "He is the wise one who never decays. We worship the *brahman*."

Thereupon, Shounaka instructed his servants to offer food to the celibate mendicant.

Once, Satyakama went to his mother Jabala and said, "O mother! I wish to go to a teacher (*guru*) and study there. Please tell me my lineage (*gotra*)."

"I have no idea what your *gotra* is," replied Jabala. "You were born in my youth and I forgot to

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ask your father about your *gotra*. When you father died, I was so struck by sorrow that I could not bear to ask others what your *gotra* is. But my name is Jabala and, if you are asked, you can say that you are Jabala's son."

(This is the interpretation that was given by Shankaracharya. The usual interpretation is slightly different. Satyakama did not know his *gotra* because he did not know his father's name. Jabala had been the wife of many and did not know who exactly was Satyakama's father.)

Satyakama went to the sage Goutama, the son of Haridrumat and desired that he might be accepted as a disciple.

"What is your *gotra*?" asked Goutama.

"I do not know my *gotra*," replied Satyakama. "I asked my mother, but she told me that she did not know my *gotra*. I am Satyakama, the son of Jabala."

Goutama marvelled that Satyakama should tell the truth and decided that such truthfulness could only characterise a *brahmana*.

He accepted Satyakama as a disciple. He asked him to collect some firewood and when this was done, he initiated Satyakama. Goutama then sent his disciple to the forest along with four hundred cows.

"I will not return until the cows have multiplied to one thousand," Satyakama told his *guru*.

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Many years passed and eventually the number of the cows increased to one thousand.

A bull told Satyakama, "We now number one thousand. Take us home to your *guru*."

(The wind-god, Vayu, adopted the form of a bull to instruct Satyakama.)

As they were returning, the bull said, "I will tell you about the four parts of the *brahman*. These four parts are the directions of the north, the south, the east and the west. Such is the radiant *brahman*. He who worships the four parts of the *brahman*, attains great fame. He becomes radiant and conquers the worlds. The fire-god, Agni, will tell you more about one part of the *brahman*."

Satyakama and the cows headed for home. When it was evening, Satyakama tethered the cows and lit a fire. He sat down in front of the fire, with his face towards the east.

"I will tell you about one part of the *brahman*," said Agni. "This part of the *brahman* is in the earth, the atmosphere, the heaven and the oceans. Such is the infinite *brahman*. The descendants of a person who worships the *brahman* thus, always prosper. He himself conquers the worlds. The goose will tell you about another part of the *brahman*."

Next morning, Satyakama and the cows headed for home. When it was evening, Satyakama tethered the cows and lit a fire. He sat down in front of the fire, with his face towards the east.

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"I will tell you about one part of the *brahman*," said the goose. "This part of the *brahman* is in fire, in the sun, in the moon and in lightning. Such is the radiance of the great *brahman*. He who worships the *brahman* thus, becomes radiant. He conquers the worlds. The water-bird will tell you about another part of the *brahman*."

(The goose is interpreted as the sun-god, Aditya. Both are white and both are usually to be found in the sky.)

Next morning, Satyakama and the cows headed for home. When it was evening, Satyakama tethered the cows and lit a fire. He sat down in front of the fire, with his face towards the east.

"I will tell you about one part of the *brahman*," said the water-bird. "This part of the *brahman* is in the breath of life, in sight, in hearing and in the mind. Such is the infinite form of the *brahman*. He who worships the *brahman* thus, becomes infinite. He conquers the worlds."

(The breath of life is associated with water and the water-bird is accordingly identified as the breath of life.)

Satyakama returned to his *guru*.

"You are shining with radiance," remarked Goutama. "You must have been instructed about the nature of the *brahman*."

"I have indeed been instructed," replied Satyakama. "But not by men. And my instruction remains incomplete without your teaching."

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Goutama taught Satyakama all that he knew.

Satyakama subsequently had many disciples of his own. One of these was named Upakosala. For twelve years, Upakosala studied at Satyakama's house. After the period of instruction is over for a disciple, there is a formal ceremony (*samavartana*) that concludes the period of teaching. The other disciples had their *samavartana*, but Satyakama did no such thing for Upakosala.

Satyakama's wife told her husband, "This disciple has served you faithfully. Please instruct him properly."

But Satyakama paid no attention to these words. Instead, he set out to travel. In his anguish, the disciple began to fast. Satyakama's wife tried to persuade Upakosala to eat something, but he would not listen.

The sacrificial fire then decided to instruct Upakosala. "The breath of life is the *brahman*," said the sacrificial fire. *Ka* is the *brahman*, *kha* is the *brahman*."

"I understand about the breath of life being the *brahman*," replied Upakosala. "But I do not understand *ka* and *kha*."

"*Ka* is *kha* and *kha* is *ka*," said the sacrificial fire. "They are the *brahman*."

(*Ka* is happiness and *kha* is the sky.)

It was the fire that burns in the household, who next decided to instruct Upakosala. "The *brahman* is

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the earth, the fire, foodgrains and the sun. The being who is present in the sun is the *brahman*. I am the *brahman*."

Next it was the fire that is used to make offerings to the ancestors, who decided to instruct Upakosala. "The *brahman* is the water, the directions, the stars and the moon. The being who is present in the moon is the *brahman*. I am the *brahman*."

Next it was the fire that is in lightning, who decided to instruct Upakosala. "The breath of life, the sky, heaven and lightning are the *brahman*," said the fire. "The being who is in lightning is the *brahman*. I am the *brahman*."

Having said all this, the various fires told Upakosala that he would learn more from his *guru*.

When Satyakama returned, he remarked, "O Upakosala! Your face is radiant. You have been instructed about the nature of the *brahman*. Who has taught you this?"

"The various fires," replied Upakosala.

"I will teach you more," said Satyakama. "A drop of water runs off a lotus leaf and cannot cling to it. In that fashion, sin does not taint one who knows about the *brahman*. The immortal *brahman* grants freedom from fire and he is in the pupils of the eyes. He who knows this, ensures his own welfare. The *brahman* is the one who presides over all good deeds. The *brahman* is the radiant one and he grants radiance to others. A person who attains this

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knowledge becomes like the gods. Such learned ones are freed from the cycle of birth and death."

"The wind that blows symbolises the sacrifice. The wind purifies everything. The mind and speech are the two paths to the sacrifice. To make a sacrifice successful, both of these must be resorted to. A chariot cannot travel on one wheel alone. The great Prajapati meditated so that the worlds might be created. It was thus that the earth, the fire, the atmosphere, the wind, the heaven and the sun, emerged. Prajapati created the three primary gods, Agni, Vayu and Aditya. From Agni emerged the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, from Vayu the *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda*, and from Aditya the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. These three *Vedas* capture the essence of all knowledge. He who knows the *Rig Veda*, attains heaven. He who knows the *Yajur Veda*, attains the atmosphere. He who knows the *Sama Veda*, attains heaven. All the worlds and all the gods can be attained through the knowledge that is in these three *Vedas*."

Adhyaya Five

He who knows the supreme one, becomes supreme himself. He who knows the-one-who-establishes (*vasishtha*) himself becomes a refuge. Speech is the one who establishes. He who knows the source of fame, becomes famous himself. Sight is the source of fame. He who knows the source of wealth, becomes prosperous. Hearing is the source of all wealth. He who knows the nature of all forms,

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provides refuge to all his relations. The mind is the source of all forms.

Once, the various senses got into an argument. Each one wished to establish his own supremacy. The senses went to Prajapati and asked, "Who amongst us is the supreme one?"

"Let each one of you leave the body by turn," replied Prajapati. "That will decide which sense is supreme."

Speech left the body for a year. When he returned after one year, he was greatly surprised to find that the body was thriving. "How have you survived without me?" he asked. "The way the dumb survive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, speech re-entered the body.

Sight left the body for a year. When he returned after one year, he was greatly surprised to find that the body was thriving. "How have you survived without me?" he asked. "The way the blind survive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, sight re-entered the body.

Hearing left the body for a year. When he returned after one year, he was greatly surprised to find that the body was thriving. "How have you survived without me?" he asked. "The way the deaf survive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, hearing re-entered the body.

The mind left the body for a year. When he returned after one year, he was greatly surprised to find that the body was thriving. "How have you

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survived without me?" he asked. "The way the stupid survive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, the mind re-entered the body.

The breath of life then decided to leave the body. Like an excellent horse that is unharnessed, the breath of life started to unshackle itself. As soon as this happened, the other senses found their powers diminishing. They acknowledged the supremacy of the breath of life. All the other senses gave to the breath of life their individual qualities.

"What will be my food?" asked the breath of life.

"You will be entitled to all the foodgrains," replied the other senses.

"What will I cover myself with?" asked the breath of life.

"All the water will be yours," replied the other senses. "You can use water to cover yourself."

Satyakama taught this knowledge to his disciple Goshruti. If a dried tree trunk is taught this knowledge, it grows new branches and leaves.

One who desires to attain greatness, should observe religious rites on the night of the new moon (*amavasya*). He should offer oblations of curds and honey and recite various *mantras*.

(The *mantras* follow.)

King Pravahana ruled in the kingdom of Panchala. Shvetaketu, the grandson of the sage Aruna, happened to go to Pravahana's court.

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"Has your father instructed you properly?" asked Pravahana.

"Yes indeed," replied Shvetaketu.

"In that case, please answer my questions," said Pravahana. "Where do living beings go after their time on earth is over? How do they return to earth? Which are the roads that lead to the worlds of the gods and the ancestors? Why is the world of the moon not complete?"

Shvetaketu did not know the answers to any of these questions. He returned to his father, Goutama, and complained that Goutama had not taught him properly.

"You are my beloved son," said Goutama. "I have taught you all that I know. But I myself do not know the answers to Pravahana's questions."

Goutama went to Pravahana and desired to become Pravahana's disciple. Pravahana was reluctant, as a *brahmana* should not become a *kshatriya's* disciple. But eventually, the king agreed to teach Goutama.

This is what Pravahana had to say.

Heaven is like a fire. The sun is the firewood. The sun's rays are the smoke. The day constitutes the flames. The moon is the coal and the stars are the sparks. It is to the fire that the gods offer oblations. And the dazzling moon is born from these oblations.

The rain is like a fire. The wind is the firewood. The clouds are the smoke. The lightning constitutes

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the flames. The thunder is the coal and the sounds of rain constitute the sparks. It is to the rain that the gods offer oblations. And showers originate from these oblations.

The earth is like a fire. The year is the firewood. The sky is the smoke. The night is the flames. The major directions are the coal and the minor directions are the sparks. It is to the earth that the gods offer oblations. And foodgrains are created from these oblations.

Man is like a fire. Speech is the firewood. The breath of life is the smoke. The tongue is the flame. The eyes are the coal and the ears are the sparks. It is to men that the gods offer oblations. And energy is created from these oblations.

When a man is born, his appointed time on earth is determined by the deeds he had performed in his earlier lives. Man originates in fire. And it is to fire that the dead body is returned after death.

Those who become wise through meditation, pass from the day to *shuklapaksha* (the fortnight during which the moon waxes), from *shuklapaksha* to *uttarayana* (the six months during which the sun travels north), from *uttarayana* to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, and from the moon to the gods. This is the path that leads to the gods and to an eventual union with the *brahman*.

The ignorant ones pass from the night to *krishnapaksha* (the fortnight during which the

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moon wanes), from *krishnapaksha* to *dakshinayana* (the six months during which the sun travels south), and from these months to the world of the ancestors. This is the path that leads to the worlds of the ancestors. From there, they move to the sky and thence to the moon. They reside there until the *punya* (store of merit) from their good deeds is exhausted. Thereafter, they pass to the sky, from the sky to smoke, from smoke to the clouds and from clouds to rain. Depending on one's earlier deeds, one is reborn subsequently. Some are born as foodgrains and it is extremely difficult to escape from such births. Others are born as men, the caste being determined in accordance with one's earlier deeds. If one does not have too many good deeds, one is reborn as a cow, a pig, or an outcast.

There are some who do not follow the dictates of the sacred texts. They go neither to the world of the gods, nor to the world of the ancestors. For them there is the third path, that of circling round and round in the cycle of birth and death. Such beings are to be shunned. Examples of such beings are those who steal gold, steal the property of their *gurus*, drink wine and kill *brahmanas*. Those who associate with such people are also damned.

There were five sages named Prachinashala, Satyayajna, Indradyumna, Jana and Budila. They began to debate about the nature of the *brahman*. Eventually, they decided to go to the sage Uddalaka to find out more about the *brahman*. Uddalaka decided that he was not in a position to teach them

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everything. He therefore took them to Ashvapati, the king of Kekaya.

The king offered them many riches, but the sages refused to accept these.

"Why will you not accept my gifts?" asked Ashvapati. "I rule my kingdom well. No thieves or drunkards are to be found in my kingdom. Sacrifices and religious rites are always observed here. Why will you not accept my gifts?"

"We do not wish for these gifts," replied the sages. "Tell us about the *brahman*."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Prachinashala.

"I worship the heaven as the *brahman*," replied Prachinashala.

"The heaven is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship the heaven as the *brahman* that righteous sons have been born to you. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But heaven is only the head of the *brahman*. Had you not come to me, your head would have fallen off."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Satyayajna.

"I worship the sun as the *brahman*," replied Satyayajana.

"The sun is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship the sun as the

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brahman that you have an abundance of desirable objects, riches and servants. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But the sun constitutes only the eyes of the *brahman*. Had you not come to me, you would have become blind."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Indradyumna.

"I worship the wind as the *brahman*," replied Indradyumna.

"The wind is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship the wind as the *brahman* that you have an abundance of gifts. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But the wind is merely the *brahman's* breath of life. Had you not come to me, your life-breath would have left your body."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Jana.

"I worship the sky as the *brahman*," replied Jana.

"The sky is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship the sky as the *brahman* that you have many sons and riches. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But the sky is merely the *brahman's* torso. Had you not come to me, your torso would have splintered."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Budila.

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"I worship the water as the *brahman*," replied Budila.

"The water is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship water as the *brahman* that you are prosperous. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But water is merely the nether regions of the *brahman*. Had you not come to me, your nether regions would have been crushed."

"How do you worship the *brahman*?" the king asked Uddalaka.

"I worship the earth as the *brahman*," replied Uddalaka.

"The earth is indeed part of the *brahman*," said the king. "It is because you worship the earth as the *brahman* that you possess many sons and animals. You have an abundance of foodgrains and all the objects that you desire. But the earth is merely the feet of the *brahman*. Had you not come to me, your feet would have decayed."

The king then told the sages that the *brahman* was this and more. To attain true knowledge, one should worship the *brahman* in his entirety, in all his different forms. The heaven is the *brahman*'s head, the sun constitutes the eyes, the sky is the shoulder, the water is the nether regions and the earth constitutes the feet.

A part of foodgrains must be offered as oblations to the breath of life. When the breath of life is

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satiated, the eyes are satiated. When the eyes are satiated, the sun is satiated. When the sun is satiated, heaven is satiated. When heaven is satiated, everything is satiated and the offerer is blessed with the radiance of the *brahman*.

A second part of foodgrains must also be offered as oblations to the breath of life. When the breath of life is satiated, the ears are satiated. When the ears are satiated, the moon is satiated. When the moon is satiated, the directions are satiated. When the directions are satiated, everything is satiated and the offerer is blessed with the radiance of the *brahman*.

A third part of foodgrains must also be offered as oblations to the breath of life. When the breath of life is satiated, speech is satiated. When speech is satiated, the fire is satiated. When the fire is satiated, the earth is satiated. When the earth is satiated, everything is satiated and the offerer is blessed with the radiance of the *brahman*.

A fourth part of foodgrains must also be offered as oblations to the breath of life. When the breath of life is satiated, the mind is satiated. When the mind is satiated, the god of rains is satiated. When the god of rains is satiated, lightning is satiated. When lightning is satiated, everything is satiated and the offerer is blessed with the radiance of the *brahman*.

A fifth part of foodgrains must also be offered as oblations to the breath of life. When the breath of life is satiated, the wind is satiated. When the wind is satiated, the sky is satiated. When the sky is

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satiated, everything is satiated and the offerer is blessed with the radiance of the *brahman*.

Sacrifices serve no purpose without this sacred knowledge. But the sins of one who possesses this secret knowledge, are wiped off as soon as he performs a sacrifice.

Adhyaya Six

Many years ago, there was a sage named Shvetaketu. He was the grandson of the sage Aruna and the son of the sage Goutama.

Goutama told his son, "O Shvetaketu! Go and spend some years in the house of your *guru*. There is not a single one in our line who has not studied thus."

At that time, Shvetaketu was only twelve years of age. He went and spent twelve years in the house of his *guru*, studying the *Vedas*. But in the process, he became vain and insolent, proud of his learning.

When Shvetaketu returned, Goutama remarked, "Son, I see that you have learnt the *Vedas*. I also see that you have become vain and insolent, proud of your learning. But has your *guru* taught you that special knowledge, whereby unheard of things can be heard of, unthought of things can be be thought of, and unknown things can be known?"

"What is that knowledge" asked Shvetaketu.

"From a lump of earth you can know about the properties of earth," replied Goutama. "From a lump

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of gold you can know about the properties of gold. From a lump of iron you can know about the properties of iron."

"My *guru* has not taught me this," said Shvetaketu. "Obviously, he didn't know about it. Otherwise, why should he not have taught me? Why don't you do so? Teach this to me."

Goutama agreed and this is what Goutama had to say.

Before creation, this universe was immersed in truth. There are those who maintain that, in the beginning, there was only untruth. Truth was created from untruth. But obviously this cannot be correct. Truth cannot have been created from untruth. There must therefore have been only truth in that primordial state.

Truth decided to diversify into many forms and created energy. Energy decided to diversify into many forms and created water. Water decided to diversify into many forms and created foodgrains.

In the beginning, all living beings had but three origins. Some were born from eggs (*andaja*), others were born from their mothers (*jivaja*), and still others were born from herbs and trees (*udbhijja*).

The *brahman* wished to enter into the three gods and create new names and forms.

The three gods were energy (*teja*), water (*apa*) and the earth (*kshiti* or *prithivi*).

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With threefold combinations, the *brahman* created many new names and forms.

(This requires explanation. One distinguishes between a gross (*sthula*) element and a fine (*sukshma*) element and the formulae for these new creations are as follows.

1/2 fine *teja* + 1/4 fine *apa* + 1/4 fine *kshiti* = gross *teja*.

1/2 fine *kshiti* + 1/4 fine *teja* +1/4 fine *apa* = gross *kshiti*.

1/2 fine *apa* + 1/4 fine *teja* + 1/4 fine *kshiti* = gross *apa*.

There are actually five elements, the other two being *marut* (the wind) and *vyom* (the sky). If these are included, further combinations like the following are possible.

1/2 fine *vyom* + 1/8 fine *marut* + 1/8 fine *teja* + 1/8 fine *apa* + 1/8 fine *kshiti* = gross *vyom*.

1/2 fine *marut* + 1/8 fine *vyom* + 1/8 fine *teja* + 1/8 fine *apa* + 1/8 fine *kshiti* = gross *marut*.)

Threefold combinations using these elements were created.

In the gross fire can be seen red tinges. These are traces of the fine fire. In the gross fire can be seen white tinges. These are traces of fine water. In the gross fire can be seen black tinges. These are traces of the fine earth. All of these forms are real.

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In the sun can be seen red tinges. These are traces of the fine energy. In the sun can be seen white tinges. These are traces of the fine water. In the sun can be seen black tinges. These are traces of the fine earth.

In the moon can be seen red tinges. These are traces of the fine energy. In the moon can be seen white tinges. These are traces of the fine water. In the moon can be seen black tinges. These are traces of the fine earth.

In the lightning can be seen red tinges. These are traces of the fine energy. In the lightning can be seen white tinges. These are traces of the fine water. In the lightning can be seen black tinges. These are traces of the fine earth.

In this lies truth. Armed with this knowledge, one can hear all that is unheard of, one can think all that is unthought of, and one can know all that is unknown. The moment one sees a red tinge, one knows that it is fine energy. The moment one sees a white tinge, one knows that it is fine water. The moment one sees a black tinge, one knows that it is fine earth. All that is difficult to comprehend is really a combination of these three gods.

When foodgrains are eaten, they are divided into three parts. The gross parts become waste, the medium parts flesh, and the fine parts the mind.

When water is drunk, it is divided into three parts. The gross part becomes waste, the medium part blood, and the fine part the breath of life.

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When energy is digested, it is divided into three parts. The gross part becomes bones, the medium part marrow, and the fine part speech.

The mind is the receptacle of foodgrains, the breath of life the receptacle of water, and speech the receptacle of energy.

When curds are churned, the fine part rises to the top and becomes clarified butter. Like that, the fine part of foodgrains becomes the mind. The fine part of water becomes the breath of life and the fine part of energy becomes speech.

"All this is still not very clear to me," said Shvetaketu.

"Fast for fifteen days," advised Goutama. "But drink plenty of water. Water is the breath of life and you will not die if you drink water."

Shvetaketu did not eat for fifteen days and returned to his father on the sixteenth day.

"Recite the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*," requested his father.

"I am afraid I cannot," replied Shvetaketu. "I remember nothing."

"Go and eat some food," said Goutama.

When Shvetaketu had eaten some food, he could remember the *Vedas* again and recite them easily.

"Now you see what I mean," said Goutama. "When only a lump of coal is left out of a raging fire, that lump of coal can burn nothing up. You were like

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that lump of coal before you ate, although there was left a spark in you. When dried grass is placed next to the lump of coal and the fire is fanned, soon you have a raging fire. After having eaten food, you have become whole once again. You can remember the *Vedas*. You will now realise that the mind is the receptacle of foodgrains, that the breath of life is the receptacle of water, and that speech is the receptacle of energy."

The sage Uddalaka Aruni had a son named Shvetaketu.

(Does this seem to be a contradiction ? Who was Shvetaketu's father, Uddalaka or Goutama? There is no contradiction, as these are not really proper names. Aruni means anyone who is descended from Aruna. Goutama or Uddalaka can similarly be a reference to an ancestor, rather than to the direct individual concerned.)

Uddalaka told his son that in a state of *sushupti* (deep slumber), one is united with the *brahman*. A bird flies around. But unable to find a permanent roost, it always returns to its nest. Similarly, a living being seeks refuge elsewhere, but always returns to the *brahman*.

It is water that takes food to its rightful place in the body. The water is like a cowherd or a shepherd. But it is important to know the origin of the body. The body is not without an origin. The body owes its origin to foodgrains. Foodgrains owe their origin to water. There can be no foodgrains without water.

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It is energy that takes water to its rightful place in the body. Energy is like a cowherd or a shepherd. But it is important to know the origin of the body, the body is not without an origin. The body owes its origin to foodgrains. Foodgrains owe their origin to water. Water owes its origin to energy. And all three owe their origin to truth. They merge into truth at the time of destruction.

Foodgrains, water and energy are the primary gods. When a person is about to die, speech merges into the mind. The mind merges into the breath of life. The breath of life merges into energy. Energy merges into the *brahman*. The *brahman* is the origin. He is the truth, he is the *atman*. Everyone is the *brahman*.

Bees make honey and in the process, collect nectar from various trees. Once the honey has been made, it is impossible to distinguish what part of the honey came from which tree. Once one realises the truth, it is impossible to distinguish oneself from the *brahman*. Living beings sleep. And when they awake, they continue to be the species they were before falling asleep. But in the state of *sushupti*, all living beings are one with the *brahman*.

Rivers flow to the east and to the west. But they eventually merge into the ocean. And when they do, it is impossible to tell them apart. All living beings originate in the *brahman*. And once they merge into the *brahman*, it is impossible to tell them apart. Tigers, lions, wolves, boars, insects and mosquitoes become as one.

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If a tree is struck near the root with an axe, the tree does not die, but juice issues from it. If a tree is struck near the middle with an axe, the tree does not die, but juice issues from it. If a tree is struck near the top with an axe, the tree does not die, but juice issues from it. It is because the tree is one with the *brahman* that it lives and collects juice.

When the breath of life leaves the branch of a tree, that branch dries up. When the breath of life leaves a second branch of the tree, that branch also dries up. When the breath of life leaves a third branch of the tree, that branch also dries up. When the breath of life leaves the entire tree, the entire tree dries up and dies. Like that, living beings are alive as long as the breath of life is in their bodies. When the breath of life leaves, the body dies. But the breath of life itself never dies.

Uddalaka told Shvetaketu, "Go and bring a fruit from that banyan tree."

"I have brought the fruit," said Shvetaketu.

"Break the fruit," requested Uddalaka.

"I have broken it," said Shvetaketu.

"What do you see inside?" asked Uddalaka.

"Minute seeds," said Shvetaketu.

"Break one of these seeds," requested Uddalaka.

"I have broken one," said Shvetaketu.

"What do you see?" asked Uddalaka.

"Nothing," replied Shvetaketu.

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"Exactly," said Uddalaka. "Once the seed is broken, it becomes so small that nothing can be seen. But from that which cannot be seen, this gigantic tree has grown."

Uddalaka gave Shvetaketu a lump of salt and asked him to place it in a vessel of water. Next morning, Uddalaka asked his son to bring him the salt. Shvetaketu couldn't, as the salt had dissolved in the water.

"I cannot find the salt," said Shvetaketu.

"Taste some of the water from the top of the vessel and tell me how it tastes," requested Uddalaka.

"It tastes salty," replied Shvetaketu.

"Taste some of the water from the middle of the vessel and tell me how it tastes," requested Uddalaka.

"It tastes salty," replied Shvetaketu.

"Taste some of the water from the bottom of the vessel and tell me how it tastes," requested Uddalaka.

"It tastes salty," replied Shvetaketu.

"Exactly," said Uddalaka. "The salt was in the water, but you could not see it. Like that, the *brahman* is in the body, but you cannot see him. Let us think of a person from the land of Gandhara. If he is blindfolded and left in a deserted place, he will not be able to return home. He will stumble towards the east, the west, the north or the south. But he

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will be completely lost. If the blindfold is removed, he will ask other people the way and be able to find his way back to Gandhara. Similarly, when a man is born in this world, there is a blindfold and he is completely lost. The *guru* takes the blindfold away. And once a person dies, he merges into the *brahman*."

"If a person is ill, his relatives surround him," continued Uddalaka. "As long as he retains his senses, he can recognise his relatives. But the moment his senses leave his body, he can no longer recognise his relatives. If an ignorant person dies, he has to be born again. But if a wise person dies, he is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Truth is the *brahman*."

Thus it was that Shvetaketu learnt the truth from his father.

Adhyaya Seven

The sage Narada went up to the sage Sanatkumara and said, "Please teach me."

"First tell me what you know," requested Sanatkumara.

"I know the *Rig Veda*," said Narada. "I know the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, history, the *Puranas*, grammar, religious rites, mathematics, astrology, the art of debating, ethics, prosody, astronomy and singing and dancing. I know all this and I also know many *mantras*. But I

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do not know about my *atman*. And I have heard that those who know about the *atman* are freed from all misery. Please tell me about the *atman*."

"You have learnt nothing," retorted Sanatkumara. "The long list that you have given me is meaningless. It is nothing but a list of names. Think of a name and worship it. He who meditates on a name as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"But is there anything superior to a name?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Speech is superior to a name," said Sanatkumara. "It is because of speech that the list you gave me has any meaning. It is because of speech that heaven, the earth, the sky, the water, energy, gods, men, animals, birds, herbs, trees, good deeds, evil deeds, truth, untruth, the beautiful and the ugly, have any meaning. Had there not been any speech, there would not have been any sense of righteousness or evil. Truth and untruth make sense only because of speech. Speech expresses everything. Worship speech. He who worships speech as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to speech?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

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"The mind is superior to speech," said Sanatkumara. "You can hold two nuts in your hand. Like that, it is the mind that holds together speech and names. When one thinks that he will recite *mantras*, he can do it. When one thinks that he will act, he can do it. When one thinks that he wants sons and animals, he can attain these objects. When he thinks about life and after-life, he realises these. The mind is the *atman*; the mind constitutes the world; the mind is the *brahman*. Worship the mind as the *brahman*. He who worships the mind as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"It there anything superior to the mind?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Resolution is superior to the mind," said Sanatkumara. "People make their resolutions. Then they think about it, speak about it and utter names. It is resolution that drives everything and is the refuge of everything. Resolution establishes heaven, the earth, the wind, the sky, the water and energy. It is because of resolution that there exist rain, foodgrains, life, *mantras* and action. Worship resolution. He who worships resolution as the *brahman*, establishes himself in the most constant of places and is perpetually happy. He can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to resolution?" asked Narada.

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"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Emotion is superior to resolution," said Sanatkumara. "One emotes before one resolves. It is only thereafter that he thinks, talks and acts. It is in emotion that everything originates; emotion is the refuge of everything. If a learned person has no emotion, his learning is useless. Emotion establishes everything. Worship emotion. He who worships emotion as the *brahman*, establishes himself in the most constant of places and is perpetually happy. He can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to emotion?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Meditation is superior to emotion," said Sanatkumara. "The earth, the atmosphere, heaven, the water, the mountains and saintly men, all seem to be meditating. Those who meditate, become great among men. Worship meditation. He who worships meditation as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to meditation?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

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"Knowledge is superior to meditation," said Sanatkumara. "It is due to knowledge that the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, history, the *Puranas*, grammar, funeral rites, mathematics, astrology, horology, debating, ethics, grammar, prosody, astronomy, singing, dancing, the earth, the wind, the sky, the water, energy, the gods, men, animals, birds, herbs, trees, insects, good deeds, evil deeds, truth, untruth, the beautiful and the ugly can be comprehended. Worship knowledge. He who worships knowledge as the *brahman*, attains the best of the worlds. He can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to knowledge?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Power is superior to knowledge," said Sanatkumara. "A strong person can make a hundred learned ones tremble. The earth is established in power. Gods, men, animals, birds, herbs, trees and insects, are all established in power. Worship power. He who worships power as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to power?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

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"Foodgrains are superior to power," said Sanatkumara. "Think of a person who has not eaten for ten days. Even if he is alive, he will be exceedingly weak and will not be able to accomplish anything. Worship foodgrains. He who worships foodgrains as the *brahman*, attains all the worlds and can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to foodgrains?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Water is superior to foodgrains," said Sanatkumara. "It is because of the rains that foodgrains grow. The earth, the atmosphere, heaven, gods, men, animals, birds, herbs, trees and insects prosper because of the existence of water. Worship water. He who worships water as the *brahman*, is satiated and can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to water?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Energy is superior to water," said Sanatkumara. "Energy arises with the wind and heats up the sky. It is because of this that there are rains. It is energy that is found in lightning. Worship energy. He who worships energy as the *brahman*, becomes radiant and energetic and can go wherever he wants."

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"Is there anything superior to energy?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"The sky is superior to energy," said Sanatkumara. "The sun, the moon, lightning, the stars and fire, all find their refuge in the sky. Worship the sky. He who worships the sky as the *brahman*, attains a state of bliss and can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to the sky?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Memory is superior to the sky," said Sanatkumara. "When people have amnesia, they cannot hear, think or know. It is through memory that they can recognise their animals. Worship memory. He who worships memory as the *brahman*, can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to memory?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"Hope is superior to memory," said Sanatkumara. "It is through hope that *mantras* are recited, religious rites performed, and sons and animals

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desired. It is through hope that one craves for life and after-life. Worship hope. He who worships hope as the *brahman*, attains all the objects of his desire and can go wherever he wants."

"Is there anything superior to hope?" asked Narada.

"Of course there is," replied Sanatkumara.

"Please tell me about it," requested Narada.

"The breath of life is superior to hope," said Sanatkumara. "Everything is sustained because of the breath of life. The breath of life is a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a teacher and a *brahmana*. If one kills a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a teacher, or a *brahmana*, one will be looked upon as a cruel murderer. But if one strikes their dead bodies with a weapon, one will not be called a murderer. The breath of life is everything. The breath of life is truth."

"I wish to know about truth," said Narada.

"To know about truth, you will have to be inquisitive," replied Sanatkumara. "You have to thirst after knowledge."

"I thirst after knowledge," said Narada.

"Before satisfying one's thirst for knowledge, one has to know about the mind," replied Sanatkumara.

"I wish to know about the mind," said Narada.

"To know about the mind, one has to have devotion," replied Sanatkumara.

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"I will have devotion," said Narada.

"Before one can have devotion, one must have faith," replied Sanatkumara. "One has to know about concentration."

"I wish to know about concentration," said Narada.

"Concentration comes only in the pursuit of happiness," replied Sanatkumara. "Before one can concentrate, one has to know about happiness."

"I wish to know about happiness," said Narada.

"Happiness lies in greatness," replied Sanatkumara. "You will first have to know about greatness."

"I wish to know about greatness," said Narada.

"Greatness is that in which nothing can be seen, heard or known," replied Sanatkumara. "Greatness is immortality. Greatness is the *brahman*. He is above and below, to the front and behind, to the north and the south. I am the *brahman*. I am he. I am above and below, to the front and behind, to the north and the south. I am the *brahman* and the *atman*. I am everywhere. A learned one who realises this union, attains bliss and can travel anywhere in the various worlds. But those who are ignorant, are restrained. Learned ones realise that it is from the *atman* that one derives the breath of life, hope, memory, the sky, energy, water, arrival, disappearance, foodgrains, power, knowledge, meditation, emotion, resolution, the mind, speech,

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names, the *mantras* and all action. The *atman* is everything. He who realises this, knows no misery, disease or death. He obtains all that is to be desired."

It was thus that Sanatkumara freed Narada from the darkness of ignorance.

Adhyaya Eight

In the physical body there is the heart. The *brahman* is in the heart in minute form. But he has to be sought before he can be found. One must desire to know him. The heart is like the sky. Heaven and earth, fire and wind, the sun and the moon, lightning and the stars, are all in the sky. Like that, everything in the body is in the heart.

When the body decays and dies, the *atman* is intact. The *atman* has no sense of sin, old age, death, sorrow, hunger or thirst. A king rules over his subjects. Like that, a person who does not know about the *atman*, is ruled over by the desire to savour the fruits of his action. Those who do not know about the *atman* during life, continue to be in bondage in the after-life. But those who know about the *atman* during life, become free in the after-life.

A learned person can attain whatever world he desires. He can associate with his dead relatives after death. But all these are really illusions. Truth lies in union with the *brahman*. The *brahman* alone is the truth and one unites with the *brahman* in a state of deep slumber (*sushupti*). A diver keeps diving in the hope for pearls. But usually, he does

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not obtain any pearls. Similarly, men cannot usually realise the *brahman* because they are distracted by illusions. The learned ones visualise the *brahman* in the heart and so attain bliss. The *brahman* is immortality and truth.

The *atman* is like a bridge; it holds the worlds together. The *atman* knows no night or day, it knows not old age, death, misery, sorrow, righteousness and evil. Sins cannot touch the *atman*. If one realises the *brahman*, the blind obtain sight and the miserable overcome their misery. The *brahman* is the radiant one.

Sacrifices are nothing but a way of attaining the *brahman*. Beyond heaven are two oceans known as Ara and Nya. There is a lake known as Airammadiya and by the side of the lake is a banyan tree. It is there that Brahma has a city named Aparajita. Brahma has constructed a golden pavilion there. Those who know of the *brahman*, go there after their deaths.

There are veins in the heart and it is along these veins that the rays of the sun course. It is these veins that unite the solar circle with the heart. When a person is asleep, he enters the heart through these veins. And it is there that he unites with the *brahman*. There are one hundred and one major veins in the heart. One of these ascends upwards and enters the head. When a learned person dies, he ascends upwards along this vein and attains immortality. He utters the sacred syllable *oum* and unites with the sun. The sun is the gate to the world

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of the *brahman*. But this gate is closed to those who are ignorant.

Once Prajapati happened to remark that the *atman* was not tainted by sin and knew no old age, death, sorrow, hunger or thirst. It was the *atman* that should be sought. He who realised the *atman*, would attain all the worlds and all the objects of desire. Hearing this, the gods and the demons resolved to look for the *atman*. The gods decided that Indra would become a hermit and look for the *atman*. Similarly, the demons decided that Virochana would become a hermit and look for the *atman*.

The two of them lived as hermits for thirty-two years. After this period was over, Prajapati appeared before them and asked, "Why are you living as hermits?"

"We wish to know the *atman*," replied Indra and Virochana.

"The being who is in the pupil of the eyes is the *atman*," said Prajapati. "The *atman* is immortal and grants freedom from fear. The *atman* is the *brahman*. He is the one you see when you see your reflection in the water or in a mirror."

Prajapati asked them to look at their reflections in a vessel of water. "What do you see?" asked Prajapati.

"We see the entire reflections of our bodies," replied Indra and Virochana. "We see our *atmans*."

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"Go and clean yourselves," said Prajapati. "Wear handsome clothing and jewellery and then come and look at your reflections again."

"What do you see?" asked Prajapati, when they had returned.

"We see our reflections," said Indra and Virochana. "We see ourselves dressed in handsome clothing and jewellery."

"That is the *atman*," replied Prajapati. "That is the one who is immortal and grants freedom from fear. That is the *brahman*."

Quite content, Indra and Virochana went away. But Prajapati was sure that they had not realised what the *atman* meant.

Virochana went and told the demons that the body was the *atman*. It was the body that should be worshipped on earth. If one did this, one would be assured all the objects of desire. (The demons therefore never gave alms or performed sacrifices. They had no sense of reverence. Even today, if a man exhibits these traits, he is likened to a demon. Such people dress up dead bodies in handsome clothing and jewellery. They think that this will enable them to conquer the after-life.)

Indra also returned to the gods, but he began to ponder. When a body is bedecked in handsome clothing and jewellery, the reflection is handsome. When a body is clean, the reflection is clean. When a body is blind, deaf or loses a limb, this is mirrored in the reflection. But surely, that cannot be the *atman*.

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Indra returned to Prajapati.

"Why have you come back?" asked Prajapati. "You went away quite content."

"I am afraid that I have not understood the nature of the *atman*," replied Indra.

"That is quite correct," said Prajapati. "Meditate for another thirty-two years."

After Indra had meditated for another thirty-two years, Prajapati instructed him. This is what Prajapati had to say.

The *atman* is immortal and grants freedom from fear. The *atman* is the *brahman*. When the body sleeps, the *atman* travels through the body. But Indra was still not content. If the *atman* was free from all emotions, why did one then feel these emotions? Prajapati asked Indra to meditate for another thirty-two years.

This process went on and on until Indra had meditated for a total of one hundred and one years.

Prajapati then told Indra that the physical body fell a prey to death. But the *atman* had no body and was therefore immortal. In one's physical body, one experienced misery and unhappiness. But the *atman* was beyond all this. Like the wind, the cloud, the lightning and the thunder, the *atman* had no body. It was established in its own radiance. Like a horse harnessed to a chariot, the *atman* was harnessed to the physical body and experienced the emotions of the physical body through the senses.

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The powers of sight, smell, speech, hearing and thinking served the *atman*. The *atman* was such that even the gods worshipped it. Those who realised the nature of the *atman*, attained all the worlds and all desirable objects.

From the *atman*, one realised the *brahman*. From the *brahman*, one realised the *atman*. A tired horse shakes its mane to shake off its tiredness. The radiant moon emerges shining after an eclipse. Like that, after death, the *atman* shakes off the shackles of the physical body and emerges in its radiance. It merges into the *brahman*.

The sky is the *brahman*. One prays so that one realises the *brahman*. One prays so that one attains Prajapati's abode. One prays so that one attains fame. One prays so that one is not destined for the evil worlds after one's death. One prays so that one attains the *brahman*.

This is the knowledge that Prajapati passed on to the sage Kashyapa. From Kashyapa, the knowledge passed on to Manu, and Manu passed it on to his descendants. To learn about the atman, one must study the *Vedas* in the house of one's guru and subsequently observe religious rites. He who attains the learning, merges into the brahman after his death. He breaks free from the shackles of birth and death.

May my limbs, my speech, my breath of life, my eyes, my ears, my power and my senses flourish. The nature of the *brahman* is explained in the *Upanishads*. May I not refuse to accept the

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brahman. May the *brahman* not refuse to accept me. May I always be united with the *brahman*. May the truth that is in the *Upanishads* be revealed to me. May the truth be reflected in me.

Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

Thus ends the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

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THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

(*Jnana kanda* includes various philosophical texts known as the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. The distinction is not always watertight. For example, the *Shatapatha Brahman* includes, towards its end, an *Aranyaka*. It is this *Aranyaka* that goes by the name of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The word *brihat* means great. And the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is so named because it is the longest of the *Upanishads*.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is divided into three sections (*kanda*). These are known as *madhu kanda*, *yajnavalkya kanda* or *muni kanda* and *khila kanda*. Each *kanda* is subdivided into chapters (*adhyaya*) and each *adhyaya* is subdivided into *brahmanas*. (These *brahmanas* are not to be confused with the *Brahmanas* that have been mentioned earlier.)

The broad scheme of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is as follows. *Madhu kanda* has two chapters, each of these chapters has six *brahmanas*. The first chapter has 80 verses and the second chapter has 66 verses. *Yajnavalkya kanda* consists of chapters three and four. Chapter three has nine *brahmanas* and chapter four has six. There are 92 verses in both chapters three and four. *Khila kanda* consists of chapters five and six. Chapter five has fifteen *brahmanas* and chapter six has five. There are 30 verses in chapter five and 75 in chapter six.

Thus, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* has 435 verses in all. *Madhu kanda* has 146 verses.

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Yajnavalkya kanda has 184 verses. *Khila kanda* has 105 verses.

Let us now get straight into what the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* has to say. It starts with a *shanti patha* (invocation for peace).

Since this is often recited, we reproduce the original Sanskrit as well.)

oum purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate

purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavashishyate

oum shantih shantih shantih.

That (the *brahman* or the divine essence) is complete. This (the universe) is complete. That which is complete (the universe) was created from that which is complete (the *brahman*). If you take away a complete entity from another entity which is complete, it is completeness that remains. Let there be peace. Let there be peace. Let there be peace.

MADHU KANDA

Adhyaya One

Brahmana One

The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, his eyes are the sun, his breath of life is the wind-god, his face is the fire-god, the centre of his body is the year, his back is heaven, his stomach is the atmosphere, his hooves are the earth, his sides are

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the four directions, his bones are the other directions, his limbs are the seasons, the joints of his body are the months and the fortnights, his feet are the night and the day, his marrow is the stars, his flesh is the clouds, the undigested food in his stomach is sand, his veins are the rivers, his liver is the mountains, the hair of his body is the herbs and the trees, the front of his body is the rising sun, the rear of his body is the setting sun, his belching is the lightning, the shaking of his body is the thunder, and his neighing is speech.

(A sacrificial horse was used at horse-sacrifices and, in this verse, an analogy is being drawn between the *brahman* and the sacrificial horse.)

The day is the vessel that is to the front of the horse and the origin of the day is in the eastern ocean. The night is the vessel that is to the rear of the horse and the origin of the night is in the western ocean. (Two golden or silver vessels were placed to the front and the rear of a sacrificial horse as receptacles for offerings.) As *haya* the horse bears gods, as *vaji* he bears *gandharvas* (a semi-divine species), as *arva* he bears demons, and as *ashva* he bears humans. (*Haya*, *vaji*, *arva* and *ashva* are all synonyms for a horse.) The ocean is the stable and it is in the ocean that the horse originated.

(Many sacred texts state that horses originated in the ocean. Alternatively, in this context, the ocean is also interpreted as the *brahman*.)

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Brahmana Two

In the beginning, there was nothing in the universe. The universe was encompassed by the hunger that is death.(By the expression 'death', the *brahman* is meant.) "Let me create mind," thought death, and the mind was created. The *brahman* worshipped himself and water was born. And while he worshipped himself, fire was also born.

(The five elements are the sky, the wind, energy, water and fire. There is a reference here to the creation of two of the five elements.)

Water is fire. (This is not very clear. But the sacred texts often state that fire is established in water.) Land floated on the water just as a layer of cream floats on milk. The land became the earth and once the earth was created, Prajapati was tired. (Prajapati signifies the creator, identified with the *brahman*.) When he was tired, energy flowed out of his body and this energy became fire.

He (the *brahman*) divided himself into three. One part was the sun, a second part was the wind, and a third part was the fire. His head was towards the east, his arms were to the north-east and south-east, his rear was to the west, his legs were to the north-west and south-west and his sides were to the north and the south. The heaven was his back, the atmosphere was his stomach, and the earth was his chest. (All of this is an image of the *brahman*.) In his excellence, the *brahman* is present in the water. He who knows this, attains eminence everywhere.

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Prajapati desired that he might have a second body. He united mind with speech and created another Prajapati who rules over the years. Prior to that, there were no years and no sense of time. Death (the *brahman*) created the Prajapati who rules over the years and nurtured him inside an egg. Thereafter, death opened his mouth to devour the baby (the newly created Prajapati). When death opened his mouth, speech originated.

And death thought, "If I kill this baby, I will not be able to create enough of foodgrains." He used speech and the powers of his mind to create all that is there in the universe. He created the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, sacrificial ceremonies, men and animals. But whatever he created, he felt like devouring. Since *adana* means to eat, the creator is known as *Aditi*. (Aditi is sometimes also referred to as the primordial female principle and as the mother of the gods.) He who gets to know this knowledge about Aditi, savours the entire universe. All that is in the universe becomes like food for him.

The creator thought, "Let me again perform a great sacrifice." The rigours of meditation made him tired and energy flowed out of his body. This energy created the senses. When the senses emerged, Prajapati's body began to inflate. But his mind continued to be addicted to his body. (That is, Prajapati himself had not attained true knowledge.)

Prajapati thought, "Let my body be fit for a sacrifice." And he entered his body again. The word

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ashvat means that which has been inflated. Since his body was inflated, he came to be known as Ashva. (A parallel is again being drawn between the creator and a horse.) It is thus that the horse-sacrifice (*ashvamedha*) obtains its name. He who knows this essence of Prajapati, is alone capable of understanding the nature of a horse-sacrifice. After one year had passed, Prajapati offered the horse to himself and sent other animals to the other gods. (A horse-sacrifice lasts for a period of one year.) Even today, sacrificial beasts are offered to Prajapati to the chanting of incantations. The sun symbolises the horse-sacrifice; the year symbolises the body of the horse. The fire that is on earth performs the role of a sacrificial fire. The fire and the sun are the same god; they are death. He who attains this knowledge, conquers death. Death cannot overpower him. Death becomes like his soul and he attains union with the gods.

Brahmana Three

Prajapati had two types of offspring - the gods (*devas*) and the demons (*asuras*). There were a few gods, but there were many demons. These two groups became rivals for ruling over the various worlds. The gods thought, "We will chant incantations at a sacrifice so that we may triumph over the demons."

The gods went to the lord of speech and said, "Sing hymns for us." The lord of speech agreed and became the chorister, the one who sings hymns. He

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obtained for the gods all the objects that can be attained through the power of speech. But the objects that can be obtained through the best of incantations, the lord of speech retained for himself. (Usually, twelve hymns are sung at a sacrifice. The interpretation is that three of these hymns enable the performer of the sacrifice to obtain desired fruits. But the remaining nine hymns lead to fruits for the chorister.) The demons got to know that the lord of speech had aided the gods. They advanced towards the lord of speech and attacked him with their sins. It is this sin that leads to evil words being uttered.

The gods went to the lord of smell and said, "Sing for us." The lord of smell agreed and became a chorister for the gods. He obtained for the gods all the objects that can be attained through the power of smell. But the best of these objects, he retained for himself. The demons got to know that the lord of smell had aided the gods. They advanced towards the lord of smell and attacked him with their sin. It is this sin that leads to evil smells in the world.

The gods went to the lord of sight and said, "Sing for us." The lord of sight agreed and became a chorister for the gods. He obtained for the gods all the objects that can be attained through the power of sight. But the best of these objects, he retained for himself. The demons got to know that the lord of sight had aided the gods. They advanced towards the lord of sight and attacked him with their sin. It is this sin that leads to all evil sights.

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The gods went to the lord of hearing and said, "Sing for us." The lord of hearing agreed and became a chorister for the gods. He obtained for the gods all the objects that can be attained through the power of hearing. But the best of these objects, he retained for himself. The demons got to know that the lord of hearing had aided the gods. They advanced towards the lord of hearing and attacked him with their sin. It is this sin that leads to the hearing of all evil words.

The gods went to the lord of the mind and said, "Sing for us." The lord of the mind agreed and became a chorister for the gods. He obtained for the gods all the objects that can be obtained through the powers of the mind. But the best of these objects, he retained for himself. The demons got to know that the lord of the mind had aided the gods. They advanced towards the lord of the mind and attacked him with their sin. It is this sin that prevails as evil thoughts. In fact, the demons also contaminated other gods with their sin.

The gods went to the life-force and said, "Sing for us." The life-force agreed and became a chorister for the gods. The demons got to know that the life-force had aided the gods. They advanced towards the life-force and attacked him with their sin. But they were not successful. Like a brick crushed against a boulder, the demons were destroyed and scattered. The demons were vanquished and the gods became the supreme lords. He who attains this knowledge, gets to know about his own self. All those who hate such a person are decimated.

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The gods wondered about the life-force. "Where does the life-force dwell?" they asked. The gods concluded that the life-force resides in the centre of the mouth (*asya*). It is because of this that he is known as Ayasya. He is known as Angirasa because he instils the juices (*rasa*) in the body (*anga*).

It is this god that is known as Dura (distant). This is because death maintains his distance from him. Death cannot conquer a person who attains this knowledge.

The lord of life (the life-force) freed the gods from the clutches of death and took them to the extremities of all the directions. The sins that were vested in the gods were left there. (The sense is that the sins were taken far away.) It is because of the presence of these sins that no one goes to the extremities of the directions (*diganta*, literally, the end of the directions).

The lord of life decided to free the gods from the clutches of death. He made them triumph over death.

The lord of life first took the lord of speech to death. Once the lord of speech had crossed death, he became free and attained fame as the fire-god. The glory of the fire-god, Agni, radiates beyond death.

The lord of life next took the lord of smell to death. Once the lord of smell had crossed death, he became free and attained fame as the wind-god. The glory of the wind-god, Vayu, blows beyond death.

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The lord of life next took the lord of sight to death. Once the lord of sight had crossed death, he became free and attained fame as the sun-god. The glory of the sun-god, Aditya, shines beyond death.

The lord of life next took the lord of hearing to death. Once the lord of hearing had crossed death, he became free and attained fame as the lord of the directions. The glory of the god of the directions is established beyond death.

The lord of life next took the lord of the mind to death. Once the lord of the mind had crossed death, he became free and attained fame as the moon-god. The glory of the moon-god, Chandrama, glows beyond death. He who attains this knowledge, is freed from the clutches of death.

After all this had been done, the lord of life began to sing. He created foodgrains for himself. Whatever be the foodgrains that are eaten, it is really the lord of life who eats them. The life-force is established in foodgrains.

The gods told the life-force, "You have appropriated all the foodgrains that there are. Please grant us a share." The lord of life agreed. He asked the gods to sit down with their faces towards him. The gods sat down and surrounded the life force from all sides. It is thus that foodgrains satisfy a person who eats them with the aid of the breath of life. Such a person satisfies his relations. And his relations face him and surround him from all sides. Such a person attains an abundance of foodgrains.

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He is supreme amongst his peers and takes care of all his relations. A relation who tries to question the supremacy of such a learned person, is unable to obtain foodgrains for survival. Only those who follow the leadership of the learned one, manage to survive.

The lord of life is Ayasya. He is Angirasa, because he provides the juices in the body. It is well-known that the breath of life is the juice of the body. A limb which tries to question the supremacy of the breath of life, withers away.

It is he who is Brihaspati. Speech is symbolised in the *vrihati* metre. Since he is the lord (*pati*) of the *vrihati* metre (representing speech), he is known as Brihaspati.

(The usual interpretation is that the *vrihati* metre stand for the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*.)

It is he who is Brahmanaspati. Speech is symbolised by the *brahman*. (In this context, the *brahman* is usually interpreted as standing for the *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda*.) Since he is the lord of the *brahman*, he is known as Brahmanaspati.

He constitutes the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. The syllable *sa* in *sama* connotes speech and the syllable *ma* connotes the breath of life. The word *sama* stands for the lord of life. (The syllable *sa* is also identified with all female objects and the syllable *ma* with all male objects.) The life force is everywhere, in termites, mosquitoes, elephants, the three regions and the entire universe. He is *sama*

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itself. A person who knows this becomes truly learned.

He constitutes the hymns that are chanted on the occasion of sacrifices.

It is speech, along with the breath of life, that generates hymns. The sage Chikitana had a grandson named Brahmadatta. Brahmadatta once said, "Hymns originate through the grace of speech and the breath of life. If I lie in this statement, may the great god Soma behead me." It is in this statement that there is truth.

He who realises this, becomes wealthy and wise. The hymns of the *Sama Veda* obtain their richness from sounds. An officiating priest who is a chorister must therefore be capable of uttering beautiful sounds. Just as people wish to see a person who is wealthy, they wish to hear a chorister who has a beautiful voice. A person who knows this, becomes wealthy.

A person who can chant melodious hymns, attains gold. Gold is also attained by a person who knows this secret.

The breath of life finds refuge in speech. He who attains this knowledge, obtains a refuge for himself. The breath of life resides in speech and gives rise to songs. There are others who maintain that the breath of life resides in foodgrains.

There was a sage named Prastota. He was an officiating priest who chanted hymns from the *Sama Veda*. While he recited the hymns, the person who

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was performing the sacrifice said, "Take me from untruth to truth (*asato ma sadgamaya*). Take me from darkness to light (*tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*). Take me from death to immortality (*mrityorma amritam gamayeti*)." Untruth is death and truth is immortality. Darkness is death and light is immortality. After this, other hymns will be sung and oblations will be offered. A learned chorister uses songs to obtain objects of desire for the one who is performing the sacrifice. Such a sacrifice enables one to attain the best of worlds. He who knows the power of the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*, need not be scared of not attaining best of worlds.

Brahmana Four

In the beginning, this universe was in the universal soul or *virat* (identified with the *brahman*). The *brahman* saw nothing but himself everywhere and said, "It is I" (*aham asmi sah*). It is for this reason that, even today, men say "It is I" (*aham ayam*), before mentioning their own names. The *brahman* is nothing but the *purusha* who destroyed all sin earlier. He is Prajapati, the supreme among all worshippers.

The *brahman* was frightened. It is for this reason that people are frightened if they are alone. But *virat* thought, "Why am I frightened? There is no one here but me." As soon as he thought so, all fear vanished.

But *virat* was not happy. It is for this reason that people are not happy if they are alone. *Virat* divided himself into two, a man and a woman. They became

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husband and wife and men were born. The sage Yajnavalkya once said, "Before getting married, a man has only half a body." This is explained by what took place at the time of creation. A wife is like the sky; she fulfils a man (who is like the earth).

The woman was known as Shatarupa and the man was known as Manu. But Shatarupa thought, "We have been born from the same entity. Is it not a sin for us to live as man and wife? Let me disappear." Shatarupa transformed herself into a cow. But Manu became a bull and cattle were born. Shatarupa transformed herself into a mare. But Manu became a horse and horses were born. Shatarupa transformed herself into a female donkey. But Manu became a male donkey and donkeys were born. In this fashion, goats, buffaloes and other living beings were born, right down to the minutest ant.

The *brahman* knew that he was creation personified. It is he who created everything. He is accordingly known as *srishti* (creation). A person who attains this knowledge, unites with the *brahman*.

The *brahman* belched and fire was created from the interior of his mouth and from the palms of his hands. It is for this reason that there is no hair in the inside of the mouth and on the palms of the hands. Men worship different gods and perform different sacrifices dedicated to them. But all these gods were created by the *brahman* and all these gods are nothing but the *brahman*. As the god Soma,

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the *brahman* created all liquid objects. This universe is established on Agni and Soma. He who knows about the secrets of creation, unites with the *brahman* himself.

Prior to creation, the universe was one and there did not exist different names for different objects. Different objects now have different names, but in reality they are one. The razor is present in the blade of the razor. Fire is present in the place of its creation. Like that, the *brahman* is omnipresent in the universe. He is present in the physical body, right down to the tips of the nails. Men cannot see the *brahman* as their powers are incomplete. They feel his presence in the breath of life, in the power of speech, in the power of sight, in the power of hearing, and in the power of the mind. But none of these is the *brahman*. They are merely his manifestations for a specific action that has to be performed. He who thinks that the *brahman* is only one of these, is ignorant. Each of these manifestations is independently incomplete. The *brahman* is all of these taken together. It is the unified *brahman* who has to be realised. Men follow footprints to look for lost cattle. Like that, the *brahman* has to be sought. To know the *brahman* is to know everything. He who realises this, attains fame and unites with the *brahman*.

The knowledge of the *brahman* is more desired than a beloved son, or the best of wealth. The *brahman* is the dearest of all objects. A man may love material objects and other living beings. But all

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of these decay and die. T[illegible] *brahman* alone is a beloved entity who is immort[illegible].

There are men who think they have realised the nature of the *brahman* and have thus unified themselves with the universe. But what is the nature of the *brahman*? And what did the *brahman* himself know?

The *brahman* knew that he was the *brahman* and that everything was subsumed in him. He knew that he was identical with the universe. There are those amongst gods, men and sages, who manage to attain this knowledge. They merge into the *brahman*. The sage Vamadeva attained this knowledge and realised that he was the *brahman*. He was the sun and Manu himself. Learned ones can thus identify themselves with the universe. The gods can bring no impediments to these learned ones, because these people realise that they are no different from the gods. He who differentiates amongst objects and worships different gods, is ignorant. The gods treat him like an animal. A single man may possess and be sustained by several animals. Like that, a single god may be worshipped and served by several men. If a single animal is lost, the possessor is saddened. If several animals are lost, the owner is saddened much more. Is it any wonder that the gods do not desire their worshippers to desert them? It is therefore natural that gods do not wish men to learn about the nature of the *brahman* and thereby cease to worship them.

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In the beginning, there were no castes (*varna*). (There are four castes - *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *shudras*. The *brahmanas* are priests, the *kshatriyas* are kings and warriors, the *vaishyas* are agriculturists and traders, and the *shudras* are a serving class.) The *brahman* was alone and the only caste that existed was that of *brahmanas*. But the *brahman* was not capable of performing all acts on his own. He therefore created gods like Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu and Ishana. These were the *kshatriyas* among gods and there is no one who is superior to a *kshatriya*. It is for this reason that, in the course of a *rajasuya sacrifice*, the king is worshipped by *brahmanas*. But *kshatriyas* were created from *brahmanas*. And no matter how superior he may be, a king has to acknowledge the superiority of his place of origin, that is, *brahmanas*. A *kshatriya* who slights a *brahmana* insults his process of creation. A man who hates a superior being, brings destruction on himself. He is plagued by sin. *Brahmanas* must therefore be revered.

But even after all the *kshatriya* gods were created, not all the desired acts could be performed. The *brahman* therefore created groups (*gana*) of gods. These were the *vaishyas* among gods. Amongst these were the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Vishvadevas and the Maruts.

(Rudra has been mentioned earlier as well. As a god, Rudra is sometimes referred to in the singular, as in the earlier instance. In other cases, the Rudras

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are referred to as a collective entity, as in this instance. The gods mentioned now were clearly lower down in the hierarchy as compared to the gods mentioned earlier. There are believed to be eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas and ten or thirteen Vishvadevas.)

But even after all the *vaishya* gods were created, not all the desired acts could be performed. The *brahman* therefore created a *shudra* among gods. This was Pusha. Pusha was the earth. The word *poshana* means to sustain. And Pusha was so named because he sustained the universe.

All acts could still not be performed. And the *brahman* created Dharma, the god of righteousness. There is nothing superior to Dharma. It is through righteousness that a king triumphs over those who are weak. Righteousness is synonymous with truth and the learned ones use the two words interchangeably. Righteousness and truth are identical.

Thus it was that the four castes were created. Prajapati became Agni amongst the gods and *brahmanas* amongst men. *Brahmana* gods preside over *brahmanas*, *kshatriya* gods over *kshatriyas*, *vaishya* gods over *vaishyas* and *shudra* gods over *shudras*. Learned ones know that Agni is the best of gods and the *brahmanas* are the best of men. This is because Prajapati is present in both. *Vedas* that have not been studied bring no fruits in the shape of rewards. Sacrifices that have not been performed bring no rewards either. Like that, no rewards

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accrue to a person who does not realise the unity of all beings and all objects. Such a person is ignorant. Irrespective of what good deeds he may have performed, his *punya* (store of merit) amounts to nothing. Blessed is the one who realises that he is no different from any other being or any other object. All the objects of his desire are attained.

The *brahman* alone is an object of desire. Men perform sacrifices and offer oblations, but the fruits accrue to the gods. Men study the *Vedas*, but the fruits accrue to the sages. Men give alms and have sons, but the fruits accrue to the ancestors. Men offer refuge to other men, but the fruits accrue to those other men. Men offer fodder and water to animals, but the fruits accrue to the animals. Ants and birds and other beings find food in the house of a householder. But none of the fruit accrues to the householder. The gods design it so that men are distracted by these actions and are diverted from the path of true knowledge. The gods do not desire men to know about the nature of the *brahman*. It is this knowledge that provides salvation.

In the beginning, there was no differentiation and the *brahman* was alone. But the differentiation has led to illusion. Men desire wives, wealth and other objects. As long as one of these objects is not obtained, men feel themselves to be incomplete. But completeness only comes from identifying one's mind with the *brahman*. A wife is like speech; a son is like the breath of life; the eyes and the ears are like wealth. But all of this must be attained if man is

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to be complete. A person who attains this wisdom becomes satiated.

Brahmana Five

A man obtains foodgrains through his acts and through his sacrifices. These foodgrains are divided into seven parts. One part is set aside for general consumption and two parts are set aside for the gods. Three parts are for one's own consumption and the final part is for the consumption of animals. All that is with life, and all that is without life, are established in foodgrains. Foodgrains are consumed, but never disappear. Foodgrains are eternal. He who realises this, becomes like a god himself. He attains immortality.

He who appropriates all the foodgrains for himself, is never freed from his sins. The two parts of foodgrains that are set aside for the gods are offered as oblations into the sacrificial fire. The part of foodgrains that is set aside for animals, leads to milk being generated. As newly-borns, both men and animals obtain their nourishment from milk. All that is with life, and all that is without life, are nurtured through foodgrains. All that is with life, and all that is without life, are nourished through milk. The sacred texts state that a person who offers oblations of milk for a period of one year, attains immortality. Even though they are consumed, foodgrains are never destroyed. Living beings regenerate them. Had this not been the case, foodgrains would have been destroyed.

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A person sets aside three parts of foodgrains for himself. These three parts nurture his mind, his power of speech, and his breath of life. If the mind is not attentive, people do not see and do not hear. The mind has the utmost importance. It is the mind that sees and it is the mind that hears. Desire, resolution, doubt, reverence, irreverence, memory, amnesia, shame, wisdom and fear, all of these are manifestations of the mind. It is because there is a mind that men get to know even if they are touched from behind. All forms of sound are manifestations of speech. Speech can distinguish between different objects, but is incapable of manifesting itself on its own. There are six strands of the breath of life. These are known as *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, *samana* and *ana*. The flesh of the body is sustained by these.

Speech, the mind, and the breath of life are like the three worlds. Speech is the earth, the mind is the atmosphere and the breath of life is heaven.

These three are like the three *Vedas*. Speech is the *Rig Veda*, the mind is the *Yajur Veda*, and the breath of life is the *Sama Veda*.

Speech is like the gods, the mind is like the ancestors, and the breath of life is like men.

The mind is the father, speech is the mother, and the breath of life is the offspring.

These three are the three types of objects - those that are known, those that one wishes to be known, and those that are unknown. Speech is the class of

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objects that are known, it is the power of speech that makes them cognisable. It is speech which preserves the knowledge.

The mind is enquiring in nature. Thus, the mind is the class of objects that one wishes to know about. He who realises this power of the mind, satisfies his thirst for knowledge.

The breath of life symbolises the class of objects that are not known. The breath of life is itself an entity that is not known. He who realises this about the breath of life, is protected by the life force.

The earth is like the body of speech. The fire is the cause that makes speech manifest. The earth is as vast as the expanse of speech, and fire has also as large a dimension.

Heaven is like the body of the mind and the sun is the radiant cause of the mind. Heaven is as vast as the mind and the sun has also as large a dimension. The sun and the earth united and the breath of life was born. The life-force is the supreme lord. It has no rival. How can there be a rival, when there is nothing else? A person who attains this wisdom, has no rival.

Water is like the body of the breath of life and the moon is the radiant cause of the life force. Water is as vast as the life force and the moon has also as large a dimension. They are all infinite. He who worships them as the infinite, attains infinite worlds.

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There is a Prajapati who presides over the year. He has sixteen parts (*kala*). Fifteen of these parts are the lunar days (*tithi*) and the sixteenth part is known as Dhruva (constant). Through these *tithis*, the power of Prajapati waxes and wanes. On the night of the new moon (*amavasya*), Prajapati pervades all living beings in the universe and rises again next morning. (Prajapati is clearly being identified with the moon.) On the night of the new moon, it is therefore forbidden to kill any living beings. Not even a lizard may be killed.

This Prajapati is the learned one. Fifteen of his parts give rise to wealth and the sixteenth part is his body. He waxes and wanes through fifteen of the *kalas* and his body is like the nave of a wheel (surrounded by spokes that are the other fifteen *kalas*). If a person is immersed in penury but continues to be alive, it is said that he is like a wheel without any spokes .

There are three worlds - the world of men, the world of the ancestors, and the world of the gods. The world of men can only be conquered through the birth of a son. The world of the ancestors can only be conquered through the performance of good deeds. The world of the gods can only be conquered through knowledge. The world of the gods is the best of the three worlds. It is therefore said that knowledge is the best object of all.

When a father is about to die, he calls his son to him and says, "You are the *brahman*. You are sacrifices. You are the worlds." The son replies, "I

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am the *brahman*. I am the sacrifices. I am the worlds." The sense of this is the following. By the word '*brahman*', the father means all the knowledge that he has accumulated through studying the *Vedas*. By the word 'sacrifice,' the father means all the sacrifices that he has performed. By the word 'worlds', the father means all the worlds that he knows of. A father thus hands over all the knowledge and all the fruits to his son. A good son is referred to as the source of all the worlds. It is for this reason that men take great care to teach their sons well. When a man dies and leaves the earth, his speech, his mind, and his breath of life, enter the body of his son. If the father has left a task unaccomplished, the son completes it and frees his father. The father continues to be on earth in the body of his son. But the dead person also merges into the immortal and divine speech, mind and life force.

Divine speech enters his body from the earth and from the fire. Divine speech ensures that whatever may be uttered, does take place.

Divine mind enters his body from heaven and from the sun. Divine mind ensures that a person is always happy and never knows sorrow.

Divine life force enters his body from water and from the moon. Divine life force ensures that a person is never hurt and never destroyed. Such a learned person realises the identity of his individual soul with the souls of all other beings and becomes like the *brahman* himself. The entire universe

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worships such a learned person as if he were the *brahman* himself. Although such a learned person identifies himself with all other living beings, their sorrows touch him not. Only the good deeds that other living beings perform merge into him. The gods are untouched by all manner of sin.

Prajapati created all the senses. Once they were created, the senses began to quarrel among themselves. Each sought to establish its own supremacy. The power of speech kept on talking, the eyes kept on seeing and the ears kept on hearing. Each was driven by its own vanity. But death decided to teach them a lesson and sought to control them. Death brought such lassitude that the powers of speech, sight and hearing became tired. But death could not touch the breath of life. All the senses then resolved to learn about the breath of life, the sense that could not be harmed or destroyed. It was the supreme of all the senses. All the other senses therefore assumed the form of the life-force and the senses were thereafter collectively referred to as the life-force. A person who is aware of this knowledge is indeed wise and brings fame to his line. A person who does not revere such a learned one, withers away and dies. This is the best of all forms of knowledge.

Agni decided that he would keep on burning, the sun decided that he would keep on radiating heat and the moon decided that he would not stop shining. Each god decided that he would perform his appointed task. Just as the life-force is supreme

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among the senses, Vayu is supreme among the gods. The other gods wither away. But Vayu does not wither away. He is without end.

The *brahman* makes the sun rise and set. And it is the *brahman* whom the gods worship. The *brahman* is worshipped today and he will be worshipped tomorrow. The *brahman* originates from the life-force and it is into the life-force that he merges. If one is frightened of death, it is the life-force that one must worship. He who begins to worship the breath of life, must complete the ritual. He will then obtain the companionship of the gods.

Brahmana Six

The universe has three types of objects. These are names, forms, and actions. Speech is the constituent of all names; it is from speech that all names originate. Speech is like the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*; speech is the soul of all names. It is speech that sustains all the names of the universe.

Sight is the constituent of all forms; it is from sight that all forms originate. Sight is like the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*; sight is the soul of all forms. It is sight that sustains all the forms of the universe.

The body is the constituent of all action; it is from the body that all action originates. The body is like the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*; the body is the soul of all action. It is the body that sustains all the action in the universe. Names, forms, and action are different, but all three are to be found in the body.

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And the body is unique, but is divided into these three constituents. The breath of life is truth and is immortal. And names and forms are also truth; they are encompassed by the breath of life.

Adhyaya Two

Brahmana One

There was a *brahmana* named Driptavalaki. He was descended from the sage Garga. Once Driptavalaki said to Ajatashatru, the king of Kashi, "I will instruct you in the knowledge of the *brahman*." Ajatashatru replied, "If that is your promise, let me donate a thousand cows. It is well known that people praise Janaka."

(There was a king named Janaka who was famous for his generosity and Ajatashatru meant that he would also be as famous as Janaka. He too would be generous. Without having waited for the instruction, he donated a thousand cows.)

Driptavalaki said, "There is a being in the solar circle. It is him that I worship as the *brahman*."

"Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I know about this *brahman*. I know him to be beyond everything, the radiant entity who is like the head of all the elements. Thus it is that I worship him. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, becomes like the *brahman* himself."

(Ajatashatru implied that Driptavalaki should teach him things that he did not know.)

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Driptavalaki said, "There is a being in the lunar circle. It is him that I worship as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I know about this *brahman*. I know him to be great, radiant and dressed in white. I worship him thus. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, has an abundance of *soma* juice and foodgrains."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in lightning as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the radiant one. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, becomes radiant and has radiant sons."

Driptavalaki said, "There is a being who is present in the external sky and in the internal sky (the heart). It is him that I worship as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I know him to be complete and constant and worship him thus. Anyone who worships him in this fashion, is blessed with sons and animals. His line never disappears from the face of the earth."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in the wind as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the supreme and invincible lord. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, is never vanquished but vanquishes his own enemies."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in the fire as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the patient one. And anyone who worships him in

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this fashion, is himself patient and has patient descendants."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in the water as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I know him well and worship him too. He who worships him in this fashion, attains all the objects of his desire and is blessed with excellent sons."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in the mirror as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the radiant one. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, becomes radiant and energises all those he comes in contact with."

Driptavalaki said, "When living beings move, they leave a sound behind them. There is a being whose presence can be detected in this sound and it is him that I worship as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the breath of life. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, has a long life."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in all the directions as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as the one who is unique and complete. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, is unrivalled. His relatives are never separated from him."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is present in shadows as the *brahman*." "Do not talk

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about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I know him and worship him as death. Anyone who worships him in this fashion, has a long life. Death dare not come near the worshipper."

Driptavalaki said, "I worship the being who is in Prajapati as the *brahman*." "Do not talk about that *brahman*," replied Ajatashatru. "I worship him as intelligence. And anyone who worships him in this fashion, becomes intelligent and has intelligent offspring." Hearing this, Driptavalaki was silent.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Ajatashatru. "That is all that I know," replied Driptavalaki. "If this is all that you know, you have not known the *brahman*," said Ajatashatru. Thereupon, Driptavalaki requested that Ajatashatru might accept him as a disciple.

"It is not proper that a *brahmana* should become the disciple of a *kshatriya*," said Ajatashatru. "I will explain it all to you without your actually becoming my disciple."

The two of them went to a person who was sleeping. Ajatashatru addressed the sleeping person by various names, but he did not awaken. The king then began to poke him with his hand and the sleeper awoke.

"When this person was sleeping, where was the *brahman* who was present in his body?" asked Ajatashatru. "How did the *brahman* come into his body when he awoke?" Driptavalaki did not know the answer.

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"When a person sleeps, the *brahman* is present in the sky of the heart," said Ajatashatru. "He can be felt through the senses once a person awakes."

"When a person sleeps and dreams, the *brahman* in him may become a king , a *brahmana*, or an inferior being. Just as a king travels throughout his kingdom at will, accompanied by his ministers and servants, the *brahman* travels throughout the physical body. The senses are like the ministers and servants."

"Sometimes a person is in deep slumber (*sushupti*) and feels nothing. There are seventy-two thousand veins in the body. When a person is in deep slumber, the *brahman* is present in these veins. The *brahman* is also in a state of deep slumber. And his joy is like the joy of a baby, a king or a great *brahmana*."

"A spider's web originates from its own body. Sparks originate from a fire. Like that, all the senses, all the worlds, all the gods and all living beings, originate from the *brahman*. The *brahman* is the truth of all truths."

Brahmana Two

A calf is tied to a stake with a halter and a noose. A person who knows where the calf lives, and knows also the halter, the stake and the noose, succeeds in destroying seven enemies. The calf is the life-force in the body, the body is the dwelling-place of the calf, and the head is the halter. Energy constitutes the

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stake and foodgrains constitute the rope. (The seven enemies connote the seven orifices which distract one's attention towards sensual pursuits. These are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth.)

Seven gods serve the breath of life. Rudra is present in the red lines around the pupils of the eyes. Parjanya is present in the water of the eyes. Aditya is present in the pupils, Agni in the black parts of the eyes, and Indra in the white parts. The goddess earth is present in the lower eyelashes and the god of heaven is present in the upper eyelashes. These seven gods thus serve the breath of life. He who knows this, never suffers from a shortage of foodgrains.

There is a vessel that has a hole at the bottom and is round at the top. (This is an image for the head.) Inside this vessel there are all sorts of fame (the senses.) Seven sages are seated there (the senses again.) The eighth sage is the power of speech.

These two (the ears) are the sages Gotama and Bharadvaja. These two (the eyes) are the sages Vishvamitra and Jamadagni. These two (the nostrils) are the sages Vasishtha and Kashyapa. And speech is the sage Atri or Atti. It is speech that devours foodgrains. He who knows this, possesses all foodgrains.

Brahmana Three

The *brahman* has two forms. The first is manifest, the second is not manifest. The first is mortal, the

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second is immortal. The first is immobile and can be measured, the second is mobile and cannot be measured. The first is capable of direct realisation, the second can only be felt indirectly.

All that is different from the wind and the atmosphere is manifest. This is mortal, can be measured and is capable of direct realisation. The solar rays capture the essence of this truth. It is this form that is present in the earth, water and energy.

The wind and the atmosphere are not manifest. This form is immortal. It cannot be measured and it can only be felt indirectly. The being who is present in the solar circle is a manifestation of this form. It is this form that is present in the elements of the wind and the sky.

In the body, there are parts that are distinct from the wind and the sky. These parts are manifest and mortal. They can be measured and are capable of direct realisation. The eye is the essence of this form and in this form are present the elements of the earth, water and energy.

But also in the body are the breath of life and the heart. The heart is like the sky. These parts are not manifest. They are immortal and cannot be measured. They can only be felt indirectly. There is a being who resides in the right eye. He is the essence of this form and in this form are present the elements of the wind and the sky.

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This minute being has the hue of goat-hair, of a yellow cloth, of a rainbow, of the flame of a fire and of a white lotus. He blazes like the lightning. The fame of a person who knows about this being spreads like lightning flashing across the sky. The *brahman* (present as the minute being in the body) has no name, form, action, quality or class. He cannot be described. He is therefore described by the expression *neti*, which means not this. (That is, no matter what expression is used, the *brahman* is not this.) The *brahman* is the truth of all truths.

Brahmana Four

The sage Yajnavalkya said, "Darling Maitreyi, I have resolved to give up the householder stage and retire to the forest for meditation. Will you please grant me your permission? If you agree, I will sever all your relationships with Katyayani."

(Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. The wife's permission was required before a married man could retire to the forest. The relationships between Maitreyi and Katyayani would be severed as the common base for these relationships was Yajnavalkya. With the sage gone, there would be no need for any further interaction between the two wives. Yajnavalkya proposed to divide up his possessions between the two wives.)

"O sage," asked Maitreyi, "If I were to obtain the entire earth with all its riches, would that make me immortal?" "No," replied Yajnavalkya. "You will only live like a rich person. But there is absolutely no chance of wealth bringing you immortality."

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"What will I do with that which will not grant me immortality?" asked Maitreyi. "Tell me all that you know about attaining immortality."

"You have always been my beloved," said Yajnavalkya. "You have again uttered words that have pleased me. Come and sit by my side and I will try to explain. But while I explain, meditate carefully about the meaning of what I say."

Yajnavalkya said, "A wife does not love her husband for the sake of the husband. She loves him for her own selfish reasons. A husband does not love his wife for the sake of the wife. He loves her for his own selfish reasons. Parents do not love their children for the sake of the children. They love them for their own selfish reasons. Wealth is desired because it serves a selfish purpose. *Brahmanas* are revered not for their own sake, but for selfish reasons. *Kshatriyas* are respected not for their own sake, but for selfish reasons. People are loved not for their own sake, but for selfish reasons. The gods are loved not for their own sake, but for selfish reasons. The elements are loved not for their own sake, but for selfish reasons. The elements owe their love to the *brahman*. All objects are loved because of the *brahman*. Darling Maitreyi, the *brahman* is the object to be seen. The *brahman* is the object to be heard about. The *brahman* is the object to be commented upon. The *brahman* is certainly the object to be meditated upon. Darling wife, the *brahman* can be realised through hearing, thought and meditation. It is from the realisation of the *brahman* that all knowledge emanates."

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"Those who believe that *brahmanas* are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by *brahmanas*. Those who believe that *kshatriyas* are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by *kshatriyas*. Those who believe that the worlds are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by the worlds. Those who believe that the gods are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by the gods. Those who believe that the elements are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by the elements. Those who believe that all objects are distinct from the *brahman*, are rejected by all objects. *Brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, the worlds, the gods, the elements, and all the objects, are nothing but the *brahman*."

"There are many examples. When a drum is beaten, sound emanates. But can one distinguish separately the various types of sound that emanate? Yet, it is because the drum is beaten that sound emanates. When a conch-shell is blown, sound emanates. But can one distinguish separately the various types of sound that emanate? Yet, it is because the conch-shell is blown that sound emanates. When the strings of a *veena* (a musical instrument) are struck, sound emanates. But can one distinguish separately the various types of sound that emanate? Yet, it is because of the *veena* that the sound emanates."

(The *brahman* is the origin of all objects in the universe and one cannot distinguish these objects from the *brahman*.)

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"When a damp piece of wood is lit, a lot of smoke results. There are sacred texts like the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, *itihasa* (history), the *Puranas*, *vidya* (knowledge), *rahasya vidya* (secret knowledge), the *shlokas* (verses) and their commentaries. All of these are like the smoke; they are the breath of the *brahman*."

"The ocean alone is the destination of all waters. The skin alone is the destination of all sense of touch. The nose alone is the destination of all sense of smell. The tongue alone is the destination of all sense of taste. The eyes alone are the destination of all sense of sight. The ears alone are the destination of all sense of hearing. The mind alone is the destination of all resolution. The heart alone is the destination of all intelligence. The hands alone are the destination of all action. The feet alone are the destination of all action. Speech alone is the destination of all the *Vedas*."

(The sense is that the *brahman* alone is the destination of all objects.)

"When a lump of salt is immersed in water, it dissolves into the water. The lump of water can no longer be taken out of the water. But if one tastes the water, it is clearly salty. The salt is in the water. Like that, the *brahman* is everywhere. He is all knowledge. The elements were created for a specific purpose and they will all disappear at the time of destruction. Just as salt dissolves in water, once one attains true wisdom, one's self dissolves into the

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essence of the *brahman*. Darling wife, that is what I have to say."

Yajnavalkya concluded.

"You have told me that the *brahman* can be realised through the senses," said Maitreyi, "And yet, you have also told me that once one attains true knowledge, one becomes completely insensate. This has confused me."

"I have not sought to confuse you," replied Yajnavalkaya. "The *brahman* can indeed be realised through the senses and knowledge."

(A word of explanation is necessary. Once one attains true knowledge, one unites with the *brahman* and becomes insensate. This does not mean that one loses all knowledge and all one's senses. It simply means that one becomes insensate to the idea of drawing a distinction between various objects.)

"When one differentiates, the *brahman* is conceived of as two (*dvaita*)," continued Yajnavalkya. (The *brahman* and the individual human soul or *atman* can be thought to be distinct.) The *atman* can smell the *brahman*, the *atman* can see the *brahman*, the *atman* can hear the *brahman*, the *atman* can talk about the *brahman*, the *atman* can think about the *brahman*, and the *atman* can try to know the *brahman*. But when everything unites with the *brahman*, how can one smell, see, hear, talk, think or know? The senses have become one with the *brahman*, how can one use them to

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realise the *brahman*? The knower and the object of knowing have become one."

Brahmana Five

The earth is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the earth. The immortal and energetic being who is in the earth is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. All that is in the earth is the *brahman*. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

(The word used is *madhu* and this is difficult to translate. Honey and nectar are unsatisfactory and we have therefore used 'mead,' which means a drink of honey and water. Obviously, mead is also conceived of as being one with the *brahman*.)

Water is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the water. The immortal and energetic being who is in the water is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The fire is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the fire. The immortal and energetic being who is in the fire is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The wind is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the wind. The immortal

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and energetic being who is in the wind is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The sun is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the sun. The immortal and energetic being who is in the sun is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The directions are the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the directions. The immortal and energetic being who is in the directions is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The moon is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the moon. The immortal and energetic being who is in the moon is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The lightning is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the lightning. The immortal and energetic being who is in lightning is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

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Thunder is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of thunder. The immortal and energetic being who is in thunder is also mead. This immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The sky is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of the sky. The immortal and energetic being who is in the sky is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

Righteousness is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of righteousness. The immortal and energetic being who is in righteousness is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

Truth is the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of truth. The immortal and energetic being who is in truth is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the body is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

Men are the mead of the elements, the elements are the mead of men. The immortal and energetic being who is in men is also mead. The immortal and energetic being who is in the bodies of men is also

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mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The *atman* is the mead of the elements and the elements are the mead of the *atman*. The immortal and energetic *brahman* is also mead. The immortal and energetic *atman* is also mead. This knowledge confers immortality. This knowledge of the *brahman* is everything.

The *brahman* is the lord and king of all the elements. The spokes of a wheel surround the nave. Like that, all living beings, all gods, all the worlds, all the senses and all *atmans*, surround the *brahman*.

The sage Dadhyan was knowledgeable in the *Atharva Veda*. He imparted the knowledge of the *brahman* and the knowledge of the mead (*madhuvidya*) to the two Ashvinis. To obtain this knowledge, the Ashvinis performed a cruel act. And the sage taught them with the head of a horse.

(Thereby hangs a tale, recounted in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*. The two Ashvinis were gods and were skilled as physicians. They wished to learn about the *brahman* from the sage Dadhyan. But Dadhyan had been told by Indra that, if he taught this knowledge to anyone else, Indra would cut off the sage's head. The Ashvinis cut off Dadhyan's head (the cruel act) and replaced it with the head of a horse. It was with this horse's head that the sage imparted the necessary instruction. Subsequently, Indra cut off the horse's head and the Ashvinis put back Dadhyan's original head.)

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It was this sacred knowledge that Dadhyan imparted to the Ashvinis. The Ashvinis stuck a horse's head on the sage's torso.

The *brahman* created all bipeds, the *brahman* created all quadrupeds. In his minute form, the *brahman* entered the bodies of all living beings. He is known as *purusha*. There is nothing that is not permeated by him.

The *brahman* adopts many forms. But all of this is illusion (*maya*). There are tens and hundreds of senses in physical bodies. But the senses are the *brahman*. The *brahman* is tens and hundreds and thousands and the infinite. There has not been anything like the *brahman* earlier, nor will there be anything like the *brahman* in the hereafter. The *brahman* is inside and outside. The *brahman* is everywhere. This is the knowledge of the *Vedas*. This is the knowledge that Dadhyan imparted to the two Ashvinis.

Brahmana Six

(This knowledge passed down a line of sages and the verses that follow, describe the way the knowledge was passed down. It is merely a catalogue of names. It needs to be mentioned that, often different sages had the same name.)

Poutimashya obtained the knowledge from Goupavana, Goupavana from Poutimashya (another one), Poutimashya from Goupavana (another one), Goupavana from Koushika, Koushika from Koundinya, Koundinya from Shandilya, Shandilya

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from Koushika and Goutama, Goutama from Agniveshya, Agniveshya from Shandilya and Anabhimlata, Anabhimlata from Anabhimlata (a second one), Anabhimlata from Anabhimlata (a third one), Anabhimlata from Goutama, Goutama from Saitava and Prachinayogya, Saitava and Prachinayogya from Parasharsha, Parasharsha from Bharadvaja, Bharadvaja from Goutama and Bharadvaja (a second one), Goutama from Bharadvaja (a third one), Bharadvaja from Parasharsha, Parasharsha from Vaijapayana and Vaijapayana from Koushikayani.

Koushikayani obtained the knowledge from Ghritakoushika, Ghritakoushika from Parasharshayana, Parasharshayana from Parasharsha, Parasharsha from Jatukarnya, Jatukarnya from Asurayana, Asurayana from Traivani, Traivani from Goutama Oupajandhani, Oupajandhani from Asuri, Asuri from Bharadvaja, Bharadvaja from Atreya, Atreya from Manti, Manti from Goutama, Goutama from Goutama (another one), Goutama from Vatsya, Vatsya from Shandilya, Shandilya from Kaishorya, Kaishorya from Kumaraharita, Kumaraharita from Galava, Galava from Vidarbhikoundinya, Vidarbhikoundinya from Vatsanapatvabhrava, Vatsanapatvabhrava from Pathasoubhara, Pathasoubhara from Ayasyangirasa, Ayasyangirasa from Abhutitvashtra, Abhutitvashtra from Vishvarupa Tvashtra, Vishvarupa Tvashtra from the Ashvinis and the Ashvinis from Dadhyan. Dadhyan obtained it from Atharvan, Atharvan from Atharva Daiva, Atharva Daiva from Mrityu Pradhvamsan,

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Mrityu Pradhvamsan from Pradhvamsan, Pradhvamsan from Ekarshi, Ekarshi from Viprachitti, Viprachitti from Vyashti, Vyashti from Sanaru, Sanaru from Sanatana, Sanatana from Sanaga, Sanaga from Parameshthi and Parameshthi from Brahma. Brahma created (*bhu*) himself (*svayam*). He is *svayambhu*. We bow in obeisance before Brahma.

This ends *adhyaya* two and thereby ends the *madhu kanda* of the *Brihadaranayaka Upanishad*. We now move on to *adhyaya* three, that is, *Yajnavalkya kanda*.

YAJNAVALKYA KANDA

Adhyaya Three

Brahmana One

There was a king named Janaka who ruled in the land of Videha. Janaka performed many sacrifices and gave a lot of alms. At one of his sacrifices, many *brahmanas* came from the lands of Kuru and Panchala. Janaka desired to find out which of them, was the most learned. He collected a thousand cows and attached ten gold pieces to each of the horns of the cows.

Janaka said, "O assembled *brahmanas*! Whoever amongst you is the most learned in the *Vedas* is welcome to take these cows away."

None of the *brahmanas* present desired to stake a claim to being the most learned.

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Thereupon Yajnavalkya told his disciple Samashrava, "O disciple! Take these cows home."

The *brahmanas* were greatly angered that Yajnavalkya should project himself as being the most learned.

King Janaka had a chief priest named Ashvala. "O Yajnavalkya! Are you indeed the most learned amongst us all?" asked Ashvala.

"I don't know about that," replied Yajnavalkya. "I salute the one who is the most learned. For the moment, I only desire these cows."

Ashvala decided to test Yajnavalkya.

"O Yajnavalkya! Death is everywhere and everything is controlled by death," said Ashvala. "How can a person who is performing a sacrifice then avoid the clutches of death?"

"Through the *hota* and the power of speech," replied Yajnavalkya. (The *hota* was a priest who poured out the libations.) For one who is performing a sacrifice, his speech is the *hota*. His speech is the fire-god, Agni. Agni is the *hota*. Agni is the way to salvation."

"O Yajnavalkya! Day and night are everywhere and everything is controlled by day and night. How can a person who is performing a sacrifice then avoid the clutches of day and night?" asked Ashvala.

"Through the *adhvaryu* and the power of sight," replied Yajnavalkya. (The *adhvaryu* was a priest

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who chanted hymns from the *Yajur Veda* and offered oblations.) "For one who is performing a sacrifice, his eyes are the *adhvaryu*. His eyes are the sun-god, Aditya. Aditya is the *adhvaryu*. Aditya is the way to salvation."

"O Yajnavalkya! The lunar fortnights are everywhere and everything is controlled by the lunar fortnights. How can a person who is performing a sacrifice then avoid the clutches of the lunar fortnights?" asked Ashvala.

"Through the *udgata* and the breath of life," replied Yajnavalkya. (The *udgata* was a chorister at a sacrifice.) "For a person who is performing a sacrifice, his breath of life is the *udgata*. His breath of life is the wind-god, Vayu. Vayu is the *udgata*. Vayu is the way to salvation."

"O Yajnavalkya! The atmosphere seems to be without support. With what prop can a person performing a sacrifice then ascend to heaven?" asked Ashvala.

"Through the *ritvika* and the power of the mind," replied Yajnavalkya. (The *ritvika* was the chief priest at a sacrifice.) "For a person who is performing a sacrifice, his mind is Brahma and Brahma is the *ritvika*. His mind is the moon-god, Chandra, and Chandra is Brahma. Chandra is the way to salvation."

"O Yajnavalkya! The *hota* at today's sacrifice will chant hymns from the *Rig Veda*. Can you tell me how many different types of hymns will be chanted?" asked Ashvala.

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"Three types," replied Yajnavalkya. "Their names are *puronuvakya*, *yajya* and *shashya*."

"And what will be attained with these three types of hymns?" asked Ashvala.

"All the living beings in the three worlds," replied Yajnavalkya.

"O Yajnavalkya! The *adhvaryu* at today's sacrifice will offer oblations into the fire. Can you tell me how many different types of oblations will be offered?" asked Ashvala.

"Three types," replied Yajnavalkya. "Some oblations will flare up when they are poured into the fire. The second type of oblations will make a sound when they are poured into the fire. And the third type of oblations will enter the ground once they are poured into the fire."

"What is attained by these there different types of oblations?" asked Ashvala.

"The oblations that flame up will enable one to attain the world of the gods," replied Yajnavalkya. "The world of the gods is flaming and radiant. The oblations that make a sound will enable one to attain the world of the ancestors. The world of the ancestors is a noisy one. The oblations that enter the ground will enable one to attain the world of men. The world of men is on earth."

"O Yajnavalkya! Brahma will ensure that today's sacrifice is protected on the southern side by the gods. Can you tell me how many gods will render this protection?" asked Ashvala.

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"One," replied Yajnavalkya. "Manas. Manas is infinite and so are the Vishvadevas. Through the mind, the infinite worlds can be conquered."

(*Manas* means the mind. The mind has been elevated to the status of a god. Some texts state that the Vishvadevas are nothing but the mind.)

"O Yajnavalkya! The *udgata* at today's sacrifice will chant hymns. Can you tell me how many different types of hymns will be chanted and what can be attained through them?" asked Ashvala.

"Three types," replied Yajnavalkya. "Their names are *puronuvakya*, *yajya* and *shashya*. *Prana* is *puronuvakya*, *apana* is *yajya* and *vyana* is *shashya*. *Purnuvakya* conquers the world of men, *yajya* conquers the atmosphere, and *shashya* conquers heaven."

Ashvala had no more questions to ask.

Brahmana Two

It was now the turn of the sage Jaratkarava Artabhaga.

"O Yajnavalkya! How many senses (*graha*) and sub-senses (*atigraha*) are there and what are their names?" asked Jaratkarava Artabhaga.

"There are eight senses and eight sub-senses," replied Yajnavalkya. "The breath of life is a sense and *apana* (the air that is inhaled) is a sub-sense. It is through *apana* that one inhales fragrances. Speech is a sense and name is a sub-sense. It is

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through speech that names are uttered. The tongue is a sense and the juices are a sub-sense. It is through the juices that the tongue tastes. The eyes are a sense and forms constitute a sub-sense. It is through the eyes that forms are seen. Hearing is a sense and noise is a sub-sense. It is through hearing that sounds are heard. The mind is a sense and desire is a sub-sense. It is from the mind that desire is born. The hands are a sense and action is a sub-sense. It is through the hands that action is performed. The skin is a sense and touch is a sub-sense. It is through the skin that one feels touch. These are the eight senses and the eight sub-senses."

"Death comes as an end to everything," said Artabhaga. "But is there any god who can bring death to death itself?"

(Artabhaga thought that he had laid a trap. Logically, Yajnavalkya could either have said that death has no death, or that death itself has a death. If death has no death, the question of salvation from death does not arise. And if death does have a death, this second death should also have a death and the process could go on ad infinitum. But Yajnavalkya avoids the trap by invoking the *brahman*, who has no death.)

"Death is nothing but Agni," replied Yajnavalkya. "And water brings death to Agni. Water is the *brahman*, the *brahman* is the ultimate death."

"Let us assume that a person who is learned about the *brahman* has died," said Artabhaga. "Do

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his senses remain in his dead body? Or do they ascend up with him?"

"They remain in the dead body and are destroyed with it," replied Yajnavalkya. "The dead body is inflated by the wind and lies there."

"When a person dies, there is an object that does not leave him," said Artabhaga. "What is this object?"

"His name," replied Yajnavalkya. "Name is infinite and so are the Vishvadevas. A person who realises this conquers all the worlds."

(When a person dies, his name continues to be referred to on earth.)

"Visualise a person who has died," said Artabhaga. "His speech merges into fire, his breath of life into the wind, his eyes into the sun, his mind into the moon, his ears into the directions, his body into the earth, his heart into the sky, his body-hair into the herbs, his hair into the trees, and his blood into the water. Where does the dead person find refuge then?"

"This is a question that should not be answered in public," replied Yajnavalkya. "Come, hold my hand. We will go out and discuss this issue in a secluded place."

The two went out and it is not known what they discussed. But certain it is that they discussed action, good deeds (*punya*) and evil ones (*papa*).

Jaratkarava Artabhaga had no more questions to ask.

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Brahmana Three

It was now the turn of the sage Lahyayani Bhujyu.

"O Yajnavalkya! I will tell you a story," said Bhujyu. "Many years ago, we went on a pilgrimage and arrived at the land of Madra. We became guests in the house of a sage named Kapya Patanchala. Patanchala's daughter was at that time possessed by a *gandharva*. I asked the *gandharva* who he was and he told me that his name was Angirasa Sudhanva. I asked the *gandharva* where the *parikshitas* have gone. I will not tell you his answer. But can you tell me, where have the *parikshitas* gone?"

(The word *parikshitas* has two meanings. Literally, it means those whose sins have been completely cleansed. The word was specifically applied to those who had performed *ashvamedha* sacrifices. The word *parikshitas* also means the descendants of King Parikshit and these kings performed many *ashvamedha* sacrifices. Bhujyu wanted to know where the *parikshitas* went after their deaths. He had obtained this knowledge from a *gandharva*, a semi-divine creature. Yajnavalkya was thus being asked to answer a question to which humans did not have the answer.)

"The *parikshitas* go to the region where the performers of *ashvamedha* sacrifices go. The expanse of that region is thirty-two times the distance that the sun's chariot traverses in one day. The earth is twice the size of that region and

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surrounds it from all sides. The ocean is twice the size of the earth and surrounds the earth from all sides. The sky between that region and earth is as wafer-thin as a razor's edge or a fly's wings. The flames of the sacrificial fire adopt the form of a falcon bird and take the *parikshitas* to Vayu. Vayu takes them to the region where the performers of *ashvamedha* sacrifices go. The *gandharva* must have praised the power of Vayu. Vayu is everywhere. He who knows this, becomes immortal."

Bhujyu had no further questions to ask.

Brahmana Four

It was now the turn of Ushasta Chakrayana.

"Tell me about the *brahman*, tell me about the soul that is in everything," said Ushasta Chakrayana.

"He who is the breath of life in your body is the *brahman*," replied Yajnavalkya. "He is in your body as *prana*, *apana*, *vyana* and *udana*."

"That is not a satisfactory answer," said Ushasta Chakrayana. "If I ask you to describe to me a cow or a horse, will you say that a cow is that which moves? Or a horse is that which runs? Describe the *brahman* specifically."

"I have given you the right answer," replied Yajnavalkya. "The *brahman* cannot be described specifically. Can the sense of sight itself be seen? Can the sense of hearing itself be heard? Can the sense of thought itself be thought of ? Can the

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intelligence be felt? Since the *brahman* is all these and more, he cannot be realised through the senses. The *brahman* alone is immortal."

Ushasta Chakrayana had no more questions to ask.

Brahmana five

It was now the turn of Kahola Koushitakeya.

(He asked a question similar to the question asked by Ushasta Chakrayana.)

"Tell me about the *brahman*." said Kahola Koushitakeya. "What is the nature of the *brahman*?"

"The *brahman* is in everything," replied Yajnavalkya. "The *brahman* is beyond hunger, thirst, sorrow, illusion, decay and death. The love for sons, wealth and land is nothing but desire. *Brahmanas* who know about the *brahman* give up all desire and resort to begging for a living. Such learned *brahmanas* thirst after knowledge. They forget about rituals and concentrate on the *brahman*."

Kahola Koushitakeya had no more questions to ask.

Brahmana Six

It was now the turn of Gargi Vachaklavi.

"The water is in everything," said Gargi. "But where is the water established?"

"In the air," replied Yajnavalkya.

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"Where is the air established?" asked Gargi.

"In the atmosphere," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the atmosphere established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of the *gandharvas*," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of the *gandharvas* established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of the sun," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of the sun established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of the moon," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of the moon established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of the stars," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of the stars established ?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of the gods," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of the gods established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of Indra," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of Indra established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of Prajapati," replied Yajnavalkya.

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"Where is the land of Prajapati established?" asked Gargi.

"In the land of Brahma," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Where is the land of Brahma established?" asked Gargi.

"Be careful," warned Yajnavalkya. "Do not ask a question that should not be asked, otherwise your head will fall off. You are asking a question about an entity that should never be asked."

(Gargi has been trying to establish a chain between cause and effect, the effect being established in the cause. This speculation can be extended upto the *brahman*. But such a question cannot be asked about the *brahman* himself. Hence Yajnavalkya's warning.)

Gargi Vachaklavi desisted.

Brahmana Seven

It was now the turn of the sage Uddalaka Aruni.

"O Yajnavalkya! I will tell you a story," said Aruni. "We were busy studying the sacred texts and performing sacrifices. For a while, we lived in the land of Madra, in the house of a sage named Kapya Patanchala. At that time, Kapya's wife was possessed by a *gandharva*. We asked the *gandharva* who he was and he told us that his name was Kabandha Atharvan. The *gandharva* revealed that there is a secret knowledge that explains life, afterlife and all the elements. That secret knowledge enables one to know the *brahman* who presides over

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life, afterlife and the elements. Only a person who knows this secret knowledge can be described as knowledgeable about the *brahman*, the worlds, the gods, the *Vedas* and the elements. Do you know that secret knowledge that you are taking these cows away? Be careful. Otherwise, your head will fall off."

"I do know that secret knowledge and I do know about the *brahman*," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Saying that you know will not suffice," said Aruni. "Anyone can do that. You have to demonstrate that you indeed do know."

"The wind is that secret knowledge," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is the wind that sustains life, afterlife and all living beings."

"I agree," said Aruni. "But you still have to tell me about the *brahman*."

"He is in the earth and inside the earth," replied Yajnavalkya. "The earth knows him not, yet the earth is his body. The *brahman* remains in the background and controls the earth. He resides within and is immortal. He is in water and inside the water. The water knows him not, yet the water is his body. The *brahman* remains in the background and controls the water. He resides within and is immortal. He is in fire and inside the fire. Yet the fire knows him not. He is in the wind and inside the wind. Yet the wind knows him not. He is in heaven and inside heaven. Yet heaven knows him not. He is in the sun and inside the sun. Yet the sun knows

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him not. He is in the directions and inside the directions. Yet the directions know him not. He is in the moon and the stars, yet the moon and the stars know him not. He is in the sky, yet the sky knows him not. He is in darkness, yet darkness knows him not. He is in energy and inside energy. Energy knows him not, yet energy is his body. The *brahman* remains in the background and controls energy. He resides within and is immortal. He is in the elements and inside the elements. The elements know him not, yet the elements are his body. The *brahman* remains in the background and controls the elements. He resides within and is immortal. He is in the breath of life, yet the breath of life knows him not. He is in speech, yet speech knows him not. He is in the eyes, yet the eyes know him not. He is in the ears, yet the ears know him not. He is in the mind, yet the mind knows him not. He is in the skin, yet the skin knows him not. He is in knowledge, yet knowledge knows him not. He cannot be seen, but he sees. He cannot be heard, but he hears. He cannot be thought of, but he thinks. He cannot be known, but he knows. There is no one else who sees, there is no one else who hears, there is no one else who thinks, and there is no one else who knows. He resides within and is immortal. All but the *brahman* is destroyed."

Aruni had no further questions to ask.

Brahmana Eight

It was now the turn of the sage Vachaklavi.

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Vachaklavi said, "O assembled *brahmanas*! Permit me to ask Yajnavalkya two questions. If he can answer these questions, it will be established that there is no one here who can rival Yajnavalkya in the knowledge of the *brahman*."

"Please ask him the questions," said the assembled *brahmanas*.

"Think of a warrior from the land of Kashi. Or think of the king of Videha," said Vachaklavi. "They pick up only two arrows and their bows before attacking their enemies. Similarly, I have only two questions for you."

"Ask please," replied Yajnavalkya.

"The learned ones speak of that which is above heaven, but under the earth," said Vachaklavi. "But it is present in both heaven and earth. It is all that is past, present and future. Can you tell me what this object is established in?"

"The object is above heaven, but under earth and is present in both heaven and earth," replied Yajnavalkya. "The object is past, present and future. Such an object is clearly established in the sky."

"You have answered one question correctly," said Vachaklavi. "I bow in obeisance before you. But answer my second question."

"Ask please " replied Yajnavalkya.

"What is the sky established in?" asked Vachaklavi.

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"The sky is established in the syllable that is the *brahman*," replied Yajnavlkya. "The *brahman* is neither thick nor thin. He is neither short nor long. He is beyond love, shadow and darkness. He is without smell, eyes, ears, speech and the breath of life. He is not the wind or the sky. He is alone, infinite and immortal. He does not devour anyone, nor is he himself devoured. It is he who controls the sun and the moon. It is he who controls heaven and earth. It is he who controls units of time, controls day and night, fortnights, months, seasons and years. It is he who controls mountains and rivers. It is him that men praise through their sacrifices. It is to him that the gods and the ancestors offer obeisance. If one does not know the *brahman*, but performs sacrifices for a thousand years, one does not escape destruction. One who does not know the *brahman* is unhappy. One who gives up the world for the sake of the *brahman*, is a true *brahmana*. He cannot be seen, but he sees. He cannot be heard, but he hears. He cannot be thought of, but he thinks. He cannot be known, but he knows. There is no one else who sees, hears, thinks or knows. He is the *brahman* who is established in the sky."

"O respected *brahmanas*! Bow down in obeisance before Yajnavalkya," said Vachaklavi. "There is no one here who knows more about the *brahman* than him."

Brahmana Nine

The sage Shakalya however still had questions to ask.

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"How many gods are there?" asked Shakalya.

"Three hundred and three and three thousand and three," replied Yajnavalkya.

"How many gods are there exactly?" asked Shakalya.

"Thirty-three," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Excellent," said Shakalya. "How many gods are there exactly?"

"Three," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Excellent," said Shakalya. "How many gods are there exactly?"

"Two," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Excellent," said Shakalya. "How many gods are there exactly?"

"One," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Excellent," said Shakalya. "You mentioned three hundred and three and three thousand and three gods. Who are they?"

"There are only thirty-three gods," replied Yajnavalkya. "The others are their manifestations."

"Who are the thirty-three gods?" asked Shakalya.

"Eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Indra and Prajapati," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Who are the eight Vasus?" asked Shakalya.

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"Fire, earth, the sky, the atmosphere, the sun, heaven, the moon and the stars," replied Yajnavalkya. "They are known as the Vasus because all objects are established in them."

(The word *vasa* means to establish.)

"Who are the eleven Rudras?" asked Shakalya.

"The ten senses and the mind in the human body," replied Yajnavalkya. "They are known as the Rudras because they make relations weep when they leave the mortal body."

(The word *rud* means to cry.)

"Who are the twelve Adityas?" asked Shakalya.

"There are twelve months in the year," replied Yajnavalkya. "These are the twelve Adityas. They are known as the Adityas because they receive everything."

(The word *adana* means to receive.)

"Who is Indra and who is Prajapati?" asked Shakalya.

"Indra is the noise of the clouds and Prajapati is the sacrifice," replied Yajnavalkya.

"What is the noise of the clouds?" asked Shakalya.

"Thunder," replied Yajnavalkya.

"What is a sacrifice?" asked Shakalya.

"The animals offered at a sacrifice," replied Yajnavalkya.

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"Who are the six gods?" asked Shakalya.

"Fire, earth, the wind, the sky, the sun and heaven," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Who are the three gods?" asked Shakalya.

"The three worlds of the earth, the sky and heaven,' replied Yajnavalkya.

"Who are the two gods?" asked Shakalya.

"Foodgrains and the breath of life," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Who are the one-and-a-half gods?" asked Shakalya.

"The wind," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is because the wind blows that living beings prosper. Wind counts as one and the prosperity that the wind brings to living beings counts as an additional half."

"Who is the one god?" asked Shakalya.

"The *brahman*," replied Yajnavalkya. "The earth finds refuge in him and the fire is his eyes. The mind is his resolution and the senses find refuge in him. He is the entity who resides in all beings. O Shakalya! Please continue to ask questions."

"What does the *brahman* lead to?", asked Shakalya.

"Immortality," replied Yajnavalkya. "Desire finds refuge in him and intelligence constitutes his eyes. The mind forms his resolution and the senses find refuge in him. The *brahman* is desire. O Shakalya! Please continue to ask questions."

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"Who is the god of desire?" asked Shakalya.

"Woman," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is in form. The eyes are his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"This being is the one who is in the sun," replied Yajnavalkya.

"Can you tell me who his god is?" asked Shakalya.

"Truth," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is in the sky. The ears are his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"He is the one who is in all the directions," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is in darkness. Intelligence is his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"He is the shadowy one. He is death," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is brilliant forms. The eyes are his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established

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in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"He is the breath of life," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is in water. Intelligence is his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"He is Varuna," replied Yajnavalkya.

"There is a being whose refuge is in energy. Intelligence is his organ of sight, the mind is his resolution. All the senses of the body are established in him," said Shakalya. "Can you tell me who this being is?"

"He is Prajapati," replied Yajnavalkya.

Shakalya was quiet and Yajnavalkya said, "O Shakalya! Are these other *brahmanas* using you like a pair of tongs?"

(A pair of tongs is used to hold red-hot lumps of coal. The sense is that the other *brahmanas* dare not challenge Yajnavalkya on their own and were using Shakalya as an instrument.)

"You are indeed arrogant that you should slight the other *brahmanas* thus," said Shakalya. "Do you indeed know the *brahman* that you insult the *brahmanas* from Kuru and Panchala?"

"I know the gods and the directions," replied Yajnavalkya.

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"If you indeed known the directions, tell me, with which god is the eastern direction identified?" asked Shakalya.

"With Aditya," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is Aditya established?" asked Shakalya.

"In the eyes," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where are the eyes established?" asked Shakalya.

"In form," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the eyes that form is seen."

"And where is form established?" asked Shakalya.

"In the heart," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the heart that form is seen."

"That is indeed so," said Shakalya. "But tell me, with which god is the southern direction identified?"

"With Yama," replied Yajanvalkya.

"And where is Yama established?" asked Shakalya.

"In sacrifices," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where are sacrifices established?" asked Shakalya.

"In devotion," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through devotion that sacrificial offerings are made."

"And where is devotion established?" asked Shakalya.

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"In the heart," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is in the heart that one finds devotion."

"That is indeed so," said Shakalya. "But tell me, with which god is the western direction identified?"

"With Varuna," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is Varuna established?" asked Shakalya.

"In water," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is water established?" asked Shakalya.

"In energy," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is energy established?" asked Shakalya.

"In the heart," replied Yajnavalkya.

"That is indeed so," said Shakalya. "But tell me, with which god is the northern direction identified?"

"With Soma," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is Soma established?" asked Shakalya.

"In initiation (*diksha*)," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is initiation established?" asked Shakalya.

"In truth," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is truth established?" asked Shakalya.

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"In the heart," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the heart that one knows the truth."

"That is indeed so," said Shakalya. "But tell me, which god is the upper direction identified with?"

"With Agni," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is Agni established?" asked Shakalya.

"In speech," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is speech established?" asked Shakalya.

"In the heart," replied Yajnavalkya.

"And where is the heart established?" asked Shakalya.

"Where is the heart established!" exclaimed Yajnavalkya. "The heart is in the body. When the heart is not in the body, one is dead and dogs and vultures devour the body. The heart and the body are in the breath of life and the breath of life is in the *brahman*. The *brahman* is immortal, he cannot be destroyed. He is unattached and alone. Tell me about the *brahman*. If you cannot, your head will fall off."

Shakalya did not know about the *brahman* and his head fell off. Thieves and robbers ran away with his bones.

"Respected *brahmanas*, ask me questions, together or singly," said Yajnavalkya. "Or, if you permit me, I will ask you questions."

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None of the *brahmanas* present dared to ask Yajnavalkya any questions.

"Man is like a tree," continued Yajnavalkya. "His body-hair is like leaves and his skin is like a bark. Blood issues from his skin like juices from a bark. His flesh and his nerves are like the interior of the bark. His bones can be compared to the wood of a tree. If a tree is chopped down, it grows again from the root. But how does a man who dies regenerate himself? How is he born again? The answer lies in the *brahman*, the source of all knowledge and bliss. In the *brahman* lies salvation."

Adhyaya Four

Brahmana One

Janaka, the king of Videha, was once seated on his throne. Yajnavalkya happened to come there.

"Why have you come, sage?" asked Janaka. "Do you desire cows or have you come to discuss the *brahman*?"

"Both," replied Yajnavalkya. "Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Jitva Shailini has told me that speech is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who cannot speak, attains nothing. Speech grants wisdom and it is through speech that one knows one's friends. It is through speech that one understands the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the

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Sama Veda, the *Atharva Veda*, history (*itihasa*), the *Puranas*, knowledge, secret knowledge, the *shlokas* and their commentaries. Sacrifices, oblations, gifts, life and afterlife are understood through speech. Speech enables one to know all living beings. Speech is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken by speech. All living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods."

"To you I will donate a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple. Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Udanka Shoulvayana has told me that the life force is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who has no life, attains nothing. The life force should be worshipped as the beloved one. It is for the sake of life that those who are not entitled to perform sacrifices, perform them. It is for the sake of life that those who are not entitled to receive alms, receive them. It is for the sake of life that people do not go to places where there is a danger of being killed. The life force is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken by the breath of life. All living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods."

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"To you I will donate a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple. Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Varku Varshna has told me that the eye is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who cannot see, attains nothing. The eye is the body and the eye is similar to the sky. The eye should be worshipped as the truth. The eye is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken by the power of sight. All living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods."

"To you I will donate you a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple. Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Gardhabhivipita Bharadvaja has told me that hearing is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who does not hear, attains nothing. Hearing is the body and hearing is similar to the sky. Hearing should be worshipped as the infinite. The directions are infinite and the directions are hearing. Hearing is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken

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by the power of hearing. All living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods."

"To you I will donate a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple. Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Satyakama Javala has told me that the mind is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who does not have a mind, attains nothing. The mind is the body and the mind is similar to the sky. The mind should be worshipped as bliss. It is through the mind that one desires a wife and sons. These are sources of joy. The mind is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken by the mind. All living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods."

"To you I will donate a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple. Tell me what you have been instructed."

"The sage Shakalya has told me that the heart is the *brahman*," said Janaka.

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"He is indeed right," replied Yajnavalkya. "He who does not have a heart, attains nothing. The heart should be worshipped as the sky. It is the heart where all the elements reside and it is the heart that is the refuge of all the elements. The heart is the *brahman*. He who realises this, is never forsaken by the heart. All the living beings gather around him. He becomes like a god and attains the gods.,"

"To you I will donate a thousand cows and a bull," said Janaka.

"Not yet," replied Yajnavalkya. "My father used to say that one should not accept a gift before completely satisfying one's disciple."

Brahmana Two

King Janaka got down from his throne and went to Yajnavalkya. "Please instruct me," he said.

"King, you are revered and rich," said Yajnavalkya. "You have concentrated upon the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. But you do not know where you will go once you are freed from this body. So that is what I will tell you about."

"There is a being in the right eye," continued Yajnavalkya. "He is known as Indha or Indra. His name is really Indha. But the gods address him as Indra because they do not like to call anyone directly by the name. In the left eye is Indra's wife, Virat. The two unite in the sky that is the heart. Their food is the flesh in the heart and the webbing that surrounds the heart is their clothing. They move

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along the veins that rise up from the heart. In each direction is the breath of life and it is this that is the *brahman*. He cannot be described through specific traits. He cannot be accepted and he does not decay. He is alone and unattached. He cannot be hurt or destroyed. Once you realise this, you will be free from fear."

"O Yajnavalkya! May you also be free from fear," said Janaka. "Please accept this kingdom of Videha and may I be your servant."

Brahmana Three

Once Yajnavalkya went to visit Janaka. He had granted Janaka the boon that he would answer whatever questions Janaka posed.

"What radiance aids men in the performance of action?" asked Janaka.

"The radiance of the sun," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the light of the sun that men sit, walk and act."

"When the sun has set, what radiance is it that aids men?" asked Janaka.

"The radiance of the moon," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the light of the moon that men sit, walk and act."

"When the sun and the moon have set, what radiance is it that aids men?" asked Janaka.

"The radiance of fire," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the light of the fire that men sit, walk and act."

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"When the sun and the moon have set and the fire is out, what radiance is it that aids men?" asked Janaka.

"The radiance of sound," replied Yajnavalkya. "Even if there is no light, it is through sound that men sit, walk and act."

"When the sun and the moon have set, the fire is out and there is no sound, what radiance is it that aids men?" asked Janaka.

"The radiance of the soul," replied Yajnavalkya. "It is through the light of the soul that men sit, walk and act."

"What is the soul?" asked Janaka.

"The soul is in the senses and in intelligence," replied Yajnavalkya. "The soul is the radiant *brahman*. He is in life and in afterlife. He is in dreams and he meditates and moves. The *brahman* surpasses the bounds of this world. At the time of birth, the *brahman* unites with the senses. And at the time of death, he is detached from the senses. The *brahman* straddles life and afterlife and the intervening space that is the region of dreams. The *brahman* witnesses the fruits of good deeds and evil ones. The *brahman* creates the region of dreams. He creates chariots, horses and roads where none exist. He creates joy and misery where none exist. He creates ponds and rivers where none exist. The *brahman* does not sleep. But he makes the body sleep and creates various objects in dreams. In the dreams, the radiant *brahman* creates desire. He

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shows beautiful sights and terrible ones. Men cannot see the *brahman*, but they can see what he does. There are those who maintain that when the body is awake, the *brahman* dreams. This is because there is no difference between what the *brahman* sees, when awake,and what the *brahman* sees when asleep."

"I am giving you a thousand cows," said Janaka. "Please tell me more."

"The *brahman* witnesses the fruits of good deeds and evil ones," continued Yajnavalkya. "He is unattached and does not get tied down by what he sees."

Janaka gave Yajnavalkya a thousand cows more.

"A great fish swims along the eastern and western banks, but returns to the centre of the river," continued Yajnavalkya. "Like that, the *brahman* touches the states of sleeping and awakening. A falcon bird gets tired of flying in the sky and returns to its nest. Like that, the *brahman* dreams and then returns to a state where there are no dreams or desire. A person who dreams thinks that he is being killed or that he is being chased by wild beasts like elephants. But all of this is an illusion. The dreamer merely transfers his fears from a state of awakening into a state of sleep. When one rises above illusions, one becomes like a god and realises the union with the *brahman*. There is no desire or fear then. There is no sense of righteousness or evil. This is a state above desire and sorrow. There is no sense of

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relations, of gods and demons, or of knowledge and ignorance. Different castes and different people mean nothing. One does not appear to be seeing, inhaling, tasting, talking, hearing, thinking, touching or knowing. This is the state of bliss and salvation."

"A supreme state of human joy is attained by a person who has health, wealth and lords over others. One hundred units of human joy add up to one unit of joy for the ancestors. One hundred units of joy for the ancestors add up to one unit of joy for the *gandharvas*. One hundred units of joy for the *gandharvas* add up to one unit of joy for those who have attained divinity through action. One hundred units of such joy add up to one unit of joy for those who are born gods. One hundred units of joy for such gods add up to one unit of joy for Prajapati. One hundred units of joy for Prajapati add up to one unit of joy for Hiranyagarbha. This is the bliss that is attained by one who realises unification with the *brahman*."

Hearing this, Janaka gave Yajnavalkya an additional thousand cows.

"A ripe fruit falls off a tree," continued Yajnavalkya. "Like that, a body that is aged or diseased is ripe. When the body dies, the minute being (the *brahman*) who is in the body, ascends upwards. Subsequently, the *brahman* returns to a new body and the elements and the senses surround him and welcome him into the new body."

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Brahmana Four

Yajnavalkya continued.

"When a person is about to die, he can no longer see and the god of sight deserts the body. The dying person ceases to see, inhale, talk, hear, think, touch or know. The outlet from the heart lights up and the minute being ascends upwards in a blaze of light. When the *brahman* leaves the body, the life force also leaves. And subsequently, the *atman* enters a new body, depending on the action that was performed in the earlier life. A leech uses a blade of grass to move to another blade of grass. Like that, the *atman* uses one physical body to move to another physical body. A jeweller uses a little bit of gold to fashion out better and better ornaments. Like that, the *atman* uses this physical body to attain better and better worlds and better and better lives."

"The *atman* is the *brahman*. He is knowledge, he is the mind, he is the life force, he is the eye, he is the ear, he is the earth, he is the water, he is the wind, he is the sky and he is energy. He has no desire or anger, no sense of righteousness or sin. A person who falls prey to desire enjoys the fruits of his past action and then returns to earth to perform more action. But a person who is free from desire, unites with the *brahman*. When all desire is conquered, man becomes immortal. Like a snake sheds off its old skin, the *atman* then sheds off the physical body. He no longer has a body and becomes the immortal *brahman*."

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Thus instructed, Janaka gave Yajnavalkya a thousand cows.

"The ones who are learned in the *brahman* tread the path that leads to salvation after death. Some say that the path is white. Others that it is blue, brown, yellow or red. But certain it is that those who know of the *brahman* tread along that path. But those who are ignorant, are destined for darkness. Those who study only the *Vedas* (without knowing the *brahman*), are destined for an even greater darkness. After their deaths, they are immersed in the darkness of ignorance. He who knows the *brahman*, conquers desire and sorrow. The *brahman* who is in the body is the lord of the universe. He is the soul of all objects. Even though I retain my physical body, I have got to know about the *brahman*. Had I not got to know about him, I would have met with certain destruction. Those who know the *brahman* are immortal. One who visualises the radiant *brahman*, hates no other being. The gods obtain their lives from worshipping the *brahman*. I have become immortal through knowing the *brahman*. He is the life of all lives, he is the eye of all eyes, he is the ear of all ears and he is the mind of all minds. He has no beginning and no end. it is through the mind that the *brahman* can be realised. And one then realises the unity of all objects. He who does not appreciate this union, dies and dies again. The *brahman* is constant and indestructible. A learned person does not meditate on many objects. He meditates only on the *brahman*."

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"The *brahman* is in intelligence and in the senses," continued Yajnavalkya. "He is in the sky that is the heart. He is the lord and the one who controls. He is not tainted by good deeds or evil ones. He is the lord of the elements and the controller of the worlds. Through their sacrifices and meditations it is the *brahman* that *brahmanas* seek to know. Once they get to know the *brahman*, they become sages. Celibate mendicants travel so that they may get to know the *brahman*. They beg for a living and have no desire for sons, riches or land. They try to free themselves from all desire. It is about the *brahman* that the expression *neti* (not this) has been used, because the *brahman* cannot be specifically described. He is alone and unattached. He does not wither or decay. He has no sense of sorrow. And he is beyond all good deeds or evil ones. It is the glory of the *brahman* that has been described in the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*. The wise ones see the *brahman* in every object and are freed from all sin. O King! May you attain the *brahman*."

"I am thankful for your instruction," replied Janaka. "Please accept this kingdom of Videha and may I be your slave."

The *brahman* is great. He has no origin. He grants us the fruit of all action. He who realises this, obtains all that he desires. The *brahman* is immortal and brings freedom from fear. He who realises this, becomes like the *brahman* himself.

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Brahmana Five

The sage Yajnavalkya had two wives, named Maitreyi and Katyayani. Katyayani was an ordinary woman, but Maitreyi thirsted for knowledge about the *brahman*. Yajnavalkya got tired of the worldly life and desired to retire to the forest. He therefore said to Maitreyi, "Darling wife, I wish to become a hermit. If you agree, I would like to sever your relationships with Katyayani."

(This is almost a repetition of what has come earlier.)

"O sage! Will the world and its riches make me immortal?" asked Maitreyi.

"No," replied Yajnavalkya. "You will simply live like a rich person. But wealth will not bring you immortality."

"I am not interested in that which does not bring me immortality," said Maitreyi. "Tell me what you know about attaining immortality."

"You have always been my beloved wife," replied Yajnavalkya. "And the words you have uttered also please me. I will explain what you wish to know. And as I explain, meditate on the meaning of what I say."

"Animals are not loved for their own sake," continued Yajnavalkya. "They are loved for selfish reasons. The *Vedas* are not loved for their own sake; they are loved for selfish reasons. The epitome of knowledge is when one gets to know the *brahman*. Sacrifices, oblations, food, water, life and afterlife,

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all these are like the breath of the *brahman*. A lump of salt is salt, whether you look at it from the inside or from the outside. The *brahman* is the *brahman*, whether you consider him from the inside or the outside. The *brahman* adopts diverse forms when the elements are created. But when the elements are destroyed, the *brahman* regains his unique self."

"I am getting confused," said Maitreyi. "I am not able to comprehend the nature of the *brahman*."

"There is nothing confusing in what I have said," replied Yajnavalkya. "The *brahman* is constant and does not get destroyed. When he adopts two different forms, that is known as the state of being in twain (*dvaita*). (This means the *brahman* and the *atman*.) One (the *atman*) can then see, smell, taste, hear, touch and know the other (the *brahman*). One can talk to or think about the other. But when the two merge and become one, how can one see, smell, taste, hear, touch or know the other? How can one think about the other? The *brahman* is the one who has been described by the expression *neti*. He has no destruction or decay. He is unattached and alone. If you realise the union, you will not talk about realising the *brahman*. I have now instructed you. There is no other road to immortality."

Having said this, Yajnavalkya became a hermit.

Brahmana Six

In *Brahmana* six of *Adhyaya* two, there was a line of sages. They passed down the knowledge of the *brahman*. This *Brahmana* recapitulates the same

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list and we will therefore skip it.

But this brings us to the end of *adhyaya* four and thereby ends the *Yajnavalkya kanda* of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. We now move on to *adhyaya* five, that is, *khila kanda*.

KHILA KANDA

Adhyaya Five

Brahmana One

That (the *brahman*) is complete. This (the universe) is complete. That which is complete (the universe) was created from that which is complete (the *brahman*). If you take away a complete entity from another complete entity, it is completeness that remains.

(This is of course nothing but the *shanti patha* that was given earlier.)

The syllable *oum* stands for the *brahman* and is known as *pranava*. This is what the son of Kouravyayani (a sage) had to say.

Brahmana Two

Prajapati had three types of offspring. These were gods, men and demons.

After they had lived with Prajapati for some time, the gods went to Prajapati and said, "Please instruct us."

"*Da*," said Prajapati. "Have you understood what I have said?"

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"Yes," replied the gods. "You have uttered the syllable *da*. You have asked us to be *damyta*."

"Yes indeed," said Prajapati.

(The word *damyta* means someone who has spirit and confidence. Since the gods lacked this trait, Prajapati desired that they should acquire it.)

The men next went to Prajapati and said, "Please instruct us."

"*Da*," said Prajapati. "Have you understood what I have said?"

"Yes," replied the men. "You have asked us to perform *dana*."

"Yes indeed," said Prajapati.

(The word *dana* means to give alms. Since men were avaricious, they never performed donations. Prajapati desired that they should acquire this trait.)

The demons next went to Prajapati and said, "Please instruct us."

"*Da*," said Prajapati. "Have you understood what I have said?"

"Yes," replied the demons. "You have asked us to cultivate *daya*."

"Yes indeed," said Prajapati.

(*Daya* means the trait of being merciful. Since the demons lacked this trait, Prajapati desired that they should cultivate it.)

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A divine voice was then heard from the sky. It said, "*Da, da, da.* Be *damyta.* Perform *dana.* Cultivate *daya.*" All three traits must be acquired.

Brahmana Three

The heart is Prajapati. The heart is the *brahman.* The *brahman* is everything. The word heart (*hridaya*) has three syllables. He who knows the first syllable, obtains gifts. He who knows the second syllable, gets the respect of his relations. He who knows the third syllable, goes to heaven.

Brahmana Four

In the heart is the *brahman*, both manifested and unmanifested. He who knows the *brahman* who is manifested, conquers the world and triumphs over his enemies. The manifested *brahman* is truth. He is the one who should be worshipped.

Brahmana Five

In the beginning, there was only water in the universe and the water created truth. The truth was Hiranyagarbha. The great Hiranyagarbha created the gods and the gods worship truth. He who knows the nature of truth, is never harmed by lies.

The *brahman* is the being who is in the sun. The *brahman* is the being who is in the right eye. The being in the sun and the being in the right eye are connected through the rays of the sun. They are also connected through the senses. When a person dies, he can see these rays of the sun, although the rays do not come near him.

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Heaven is the head of the being who is in the sun.

The earth (*bhur*) is the head of the being who is in the sun. The atmosphere (*bhuvah*) is the arms and heaven (*svar*) is the feet. He who knows this, conquers all sin.

The earth is the head of the being who is in the right eye. The atmosphere constitutes the arms and heaven constitutes the feet. He who knows this, conquers all sin.

Brahmana Six

The radiant and beautiful *brahman* is in the heart. But his form is as minute as that of a grain of barley. He is the lord and controller of everything in the universe.

Brahmana Seven

The learned ones say that the lightning is the *brahman*. The lightning is, in fact, the *brahman*. He who realises this, conquers all sin.

Brahmana Eight

Worship speech in the form of a cow. The *mantras* that are used to offer oblations are like the udders of the cow. It is with the aid of these udders that men, gods and ancestors survive. The breath of life is like a bull and the mind is the calf.

Brahmana Nine

Fire is used to cook foodgrains and fire is inside the body. If the ears are covered, a sound is heard.

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That is the sound of the fire raging. When a man is about to die, this sound is no longer heard.

Brahmana Ten

When a learned person dies, he merges with the wind. The wind makes a hole for him, like the hole in the axle of a chariot. Through this hole, the learned person ascends upwards and merges with the sun. The sun makes a hole for him. Through this hole, the learned person ascends upwards and merges with the moon. The moon makes a hole for him. Through this hole, the learned person ascends upwards and merges into the immortal worlds. He lives there for many years.

Brahmana Eleven

Disease is only a form of penance. He who realises this, attains the best of worlds. A dead body is taken to the forest, because a forest is the place for meditation. He who realises this, attains the best of worlds. A dead body is placed on the fire, because fire is meditation. He who realises this, attains the best of worlds.

Brahmana Twelve

There are some who maintain that food is the *brahman*. This is not quite true because, in the absence of the life-force, food rots. There are some who maintain that the life-force is the *brahman*. This is not quite true, because in the absence of food, the life-force dries up. But when the life-force and food are united, they are the *brahman*. That is

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what the sage Pratrida was told by his father. He who realises this, remains surrounded by all living beings and gives them pleasure.

Brahmana Thirteen

The breath of life must be worshipped. It is the breath of life that makes the body arise. He who realises this, has a son who knows about the breath of life. The breath of life must be worshipped like the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*. The breath of life must be worshipped like the *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda*. It is because the breath of life is there that all living beings are alive. He who realises this, is acknowledged by all living beings to be supreme. The breath of life must be worshipped like the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda*. It is the breath of life that brings calmness to all living beings. He who realises this, is acknowledged by all living beings to be supreme. The breath of life must be worshipped as it protects the body from wounds. He who realises this, attains the breath of life.

Brahmana Fourteen

The *gayatri mantra* is sacred. There are eight syllables in the first phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. These syllables stand for the heaven, the atmosphere and the earth. He who knows this first phrase, attains everything in these three worlds.

There are eight syllables in the second phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. He who knows this second phrase, knows everything that there is to be learnt

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from the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*.

There are eight syllables in the third phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. He who knows this third phrase, conquers all the beings in the universe.

He who knows the fourth phrase of the *gayatri mantra*, becomes as radiant and prosperous as the sun.

The *gayatri mantra* protects one from the senses. At the time of initiation, it is in the *gayatri mantra* that the teacher instructs the disciple. Thus protected, the disciple is always protected from his senses. The *gayatri mantra* is the life-force and the truth.

There is another sacred *mantra* known as the *savitri* and composed in the *anushtupa metre*. At the time of initiation, some teachers instruct their disciples in the *savitri mantra*. That should not be done. It is the *gayatri mantra* that is indicated. In fact, the *gayatri mantra* is a personification of the *savitri mantra*.

If a person obtains the three worlds and all their riches, his pleasure is equivalent to the pleasure derived from knowing the first phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. If a person knows the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*, the fruits obtained are equivalent to the fruits obtained from knowing the second phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. If a person obtains all the beings in the universe, his pleasure is rivalled by the pleasure of someone who knows the

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third phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. The sun that radiates heat is like the fourth phrase of the *gayatri mantra*. There are no possessions and no material objects that can equal the joy obtained from knowing the fourth phrase of the *gayatri mantra*.

The *gayatri* has four phrases. The *gayatri* is an object of meditation. We bow in obeisance before the sacred *gayatri mantra*. May sin not contaminate the *gayatri mantra*. May the *gayatri mantra* not be hated. May it make us prosperous and may it protect us from our enemies.

The sage Ashvatarashva had a son named Budila. Budila became an elephant and bore Janaka, the king of Videha, on his back.

(This presumably refers to Budila's being born as an elephant in a subsequent life.)

"You know the *gayatri mantra*," said Janaka. "How did you then come to be an elephant?"

"Because I never got to know what the mouth of the *gayatri mantra* is," replied Budila.

"The fire is the mouth of the *gayatri mantra*," said Janaka. "If a fire has plenty of wood, it burns up everything. Like that, the *gayatri mantra* burns up all sin and makes a man youthful, pure and immortal."

Brahmana Fifteen

The true nature of the *brahman* is hidden inside a golden vessel. (The golden vessel is a symbol for the distractions of the material world.) O Pusha! (Pusha

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is a manifestation of the sun-god.) Please open up for us the nature of the *brahman*. You are the sun-god; you are the son of Prajapati. Please restrain your rays and your energy. Display to us the form that brings us welfare. May we known the *brahman*, may we know that we are the *brahman*. May we merge into the life force and become immortal. The dust of this body will become ashes through the fire. But O Agni! Remember us and remember the good deeds we have performed. May we take the path that will lead us to the fruits of our action. You are the learned one. Banish all sin from our hearts. We bow in obeisance before you.

Adhyaya Six

Brahmana One

He who knows the best and the eldest, becomes the best and the eldest amongst his relations. He becomes the best and the eldest amongst his peers.

(Knowing the best and the eldest means knowing the *brahman*.)

The *brahman* is the one who establishes. He who knows this, establishes himself amongst his relations and peers.

The *brahman* grants fame. He who knows this, attains fame in all regions and at all times. Sight is fame, because sight is present in all regions and at all times.

The *brahman* brings wealth. He who knows this, obtains all the objects that he desires. Hearing is

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wealth. If hearing is present, all the *Vedas* can be heard.

The *brahman* is form. He who knows this, becomes the refuge of others.

He who knows about the different races, is blessed with offspring and animals.

One day, the senses had a dispute. They wished to know which of them was the most important. They therefore went to Brahma and asked, "Who amongst us is supreme?"

"The supreme one is the one whose departure will cause the body to die," replied Brahma.

Speech left the body for a year. He returned after a year and was greatly surprised to find that the body was still alive. "How could you survive?" he asked the other senses.

"The way the dumb stay alive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, speech re-entered the body.

The eyes left the body for a year. They returned after a year and were greatly surprised to find that the body was still alive. "How could you survive?" the eyes asked the other senses.

"The way the blind stay alive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, the eye re-entered the body.

The ears left the body for a year. They returned after a year and were greatly surprised to find that the body was still alive. "How could you survive?" the ears asked the other senses.

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"The way the deaf stay alive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, the ears re-entered the body.

The mind left the body for a year. The mind returned after a year and was greatly surprised to find that the body was still alive. "How could you survive?" the mind asked the other senses.

"The way the stupid stay alive," replied the other senses. Thereupon, the mind re-entered the body.

It was now the turn of the breath of life to leave the body. Like a handsome horse from the land of Sindhu, the breath of life prepared to take off. But immediately, all the other senses became senseless. "Please do not leave," they told the breath of life. "Without you, we will not survive."

"You will first have to decide what oblations you will offer me," retorted the breath of life.

"You can have my supremacy," said speech.

"You can have my power to establish things," said the eyes.

"You can have my power to create wealth," said the ears.

"You can have my power to create form," said the mind.

In addition, the other senses decreed that the breath of life would be entitled to all the food and water that living beings possessed. Those who know that the breath of life is food, eat and accept only that which is food. And because learned ones know

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that the breath of life is water, they wash themselves after eating.

Brahmana Two

The sage Shvetaketu was the son of the sage Goutama.

Shvetaketu once came to visit the kingdom of Panchala. At that time, King Pravahana of Panchala was being served by his attendants.

Pravahana knew Shvetaketu to be insolent. He therefore told Shvetaketu, "Come, my son. Have you been properly instructed by your father ?"

(The fact that Pravahana addressed Shvetaketu as a son was meant to put the sage in his place.)

"Yes," replied Shvetaketu. "I have been properly instructed by my father."

"Do you know how men follow different paths after their deaths ?" asked Pravahana. "Do you know how they return to earth? Do you know why the afterlife is not crowded by all these beings? Do you know how many oblations are necessary before water can speak as men? There are roads that lead to the world of the ancestors and to the world of the gods. These roads lie between heaven and earth. Do you know how men get to tread these roads?"

Shvetaketu didn't know the answers to any of these five questions. The king asked him to be seated, but Shvetaketu left in huff. He went to his father and complained, "You have not instructed me

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properly. The king asked me five questions and I didn't know the answer to a single one."

"Believe me, I have taught you all that I know," said Goutama. "Let us return to Pravahana and become his disciples."

Shvetaketu refused, but Goutama went along to King Pravahana. The king welcomed Goutama and offered to grant him a boon. Goutama desired that Pravahana tell him the answers to the questions he had posed. At first, the king was reluctant because this knowledge was meant for the gods, not for men. However, he had agreed to grant Goutama a boon and couldn't very well refuse.

"Please do not offer me gold, cows, horses, clothing and servants," said Goutama. "I have plenty of these. I wish the knowledge that makes men immortal. I wish to become your disciple."

"Since you are so insistent, I will instruct you," replied Pravahana. "I will reveal to you the knowledge that no *brahmana* has ever been privy to. But please pardon my sin."

(The sin was that a *kshatriya* had accepted a *brahmana* as a disciple.)

"Heaven is fire," continued Pravahana. "The sun is the fuel for the fire. The solar rays are the smoke from the fire and the days are the flames. As for the directions, they are the sparks. It is to this fire that the gods offer oblations and it is from these oblations that Soma is born. Rain (Parjanya) is the fire. The year is the fuel and the clouds are the

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smoke from the fire. Lightning is the flame and thunder is the spark. It is to this fire that the gods offer oblations of *soma* juice and it is from these oblations that showers originate. The earth is the fire. The night is the flame and the moon is the coal. The stars are like sparks. It is to this fire that the gods offer oblations of showers and it is from these oblations that food is created. Man is the fire. The face is the fuel and the breath of life is the smoke. Speech is the flame, the eyes are the coals, and the ears are the sparks. It is to this fire that the gods offer oblations of food and it is from these oblations that energy is obtained. The woman is the fire from which man is born."

"When men die, they are burnt by the fire," continued Pravahana. "In this fire, the gods make an oblation of men. Those who are learned and worship the *brahman*, attain the gods, the sun and lightning after their deaths. Lightning takes them to the immortal world where they live for many years. They do not have to be born again on earth. Those who meditate and perform sacrifices, attain the moon and the world of the ancestors after their deaths. They become like foodgrains and are devoured by the gods. Once the rewards for their good deeds are exhausted, they pass to the sky and from there, progressively to the wind, rain and the death. On earth, they are born again. Thus they continue to cycle between the worlds. They are born as insects, those who do not know that the roads to the worlds of the gods and the ancestors are different."

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Brahmana Three

A person who desires to be great has to follow certain prescribed rites. At an auspicious time, he has to fast for twelve days. Having collected fruits as offerings and having cleaned the ground, he should light a fire and offer oblations.

(The details of the *mantras* are given, but these we will skip.)

If this *mantra* is applied on a dead tree, the tree begins to sprout fresh leaves and branches. This was the *mantra* that the sage Uddalaka taught to Yajnavalkya, Yajnayalkya to Madhuka, Madhuka to Chulaka, Chulaka to Janaki and Janaki to Satyakama. This *mantra* should be revealed only to a son or a disciple.

Brahmana Four

The earth is the essence of the elements, water is the essence of the earth, the herbs are the essence of the water, flowers are the essence of the herbs, fruits are the essence of the flowers, and energy is the essence of men.

This is the knowledge that was known to the sages Uddalaka, Moudgalya and Kumaraharita.

(Several *mantras* follow, but these we will skip.)

If a person desires that a fair son be born to him and that the son should study one of the *Vedas*, he and his wife must cook and eat rice mixed with clarified butter. If a person desires that a brown-hued son be born to him and that the son should

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study two of the *Vedas*, he and his wife must cook and eat rice mixed with clarified butter and curds. If a person desires that a dark son be born to him and that the son should study three of the *Vedas*, he and his wife must cook and eat rice mixed with water and clarified butter. If a person desires that a learned daughter be born to him, he and his wife should cook and eat rice mixed with sesamum seeds and clarified butter.

If a person desires that a learned son be born to him and that the son should study all the *Vedas*, he and his wife must cook and eat rice mixed with the meat of a bull.

(Several more *mantras* follow, all aimed at obtaining offspring of one's desire.)

Once a son is born, a fire must be lit. Clarified butter mixed with curds must be placed in a metal vessel. This oblation will slowly be poured into the fire, to the chanting of prescribed *mantras*.

The father must say, "May I thrive in this household in the body of my son and provide for a thousand men. May my son have offspring and animals. I offer my breath of life to my son." The father will feed the son curds, honey and clarified butter, and say, "I give you the earth. I give you the atmosphere. I give you heaven. I give you the three worlds. I name you the *Vedas*."

(This is the secret name of every man and is distinct from whatever other name he may eventually have.)

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The son will then be handed over to the mother so that the mother may feed him milk. The father will tell the mother, "You are as fortunate as the great Arundhati. You have granted me a son. May you have many sons."

May such a son surpass his father. May such a son surpass his grandfather.

Brahmana Five

Brahmana five is merely a list of sages. It is along this line that the sacred knowledge of the *Upanishads* have passed down. The name of the teacher and the name of the disciple are given. What is interesting is that the proper name of the sage is often not given. The sage concerned is simply described as the son of such and such . Moreover, in such a description, the sage is usually described as the son of his mother rather than as the son of his father. The list is conveniently summarised in the following tabular form.

	Name of disciple	*Name of teacher*
1.	Son of Poutimashi	Son of Katyayani
2.	Son of Katyayani	Son of Goutami
3.	Son of Goutami	Son of Bharadvaji
4.	Son of Bharadvaji	Son of Parashari
5.	Son of Parashari	Son of Oupasvasti
6.	Son of Oupasvasti	Son of Parashari
7.	Son of Parashari	Son of Katyayani

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8.	Son of Katyayani	Son of Koushiki
9.	Son of Koushiki	Sons of Alabi and Vaiyaghrapadi
10.	Son of Vaiyaghrapadi	Sons of Kapi and Kanvi
11.	Son of Kapi	Son of Atreyi
12.	Son of Atreyi	Son of Goutami
13.	Son of Goutami	Son of Bharadvaji
14.	Son of Bharadvaji	Son of Parashari
15.	Son of Parashari	Son of Vatsi
16.	Son of Vatsi	Son of Parashari
17.	Son of Parashari	Son of Varkaruni
18.	Son of *Varkaruni*	Son of *Varkaruni*
19.	Son of Varkaruni	Son of Artabhagi
20.	Son of Artabhagi	Son of Shoungi
21.	Son of Shoungi	Son of Samkriti
22.	Son of Samkriti	Son of Alambayani
23.	Son of Alambayani	Son of Alambi
24.	Son of Alambi	Son of Jayanti
25.	Son of Jayanti	Son of Mandukayani
26.	Son of Mandukayani	Son of Manduki
27.	Son of Manduki	Son of Shandili
28.	Son of Shandili	Son of Rathitari
29.	Son of Rathitari	Son of Bhaluki
30.	Son of Bhaluki	Son of Kounchiki
31.	Son of Kounchiki	Son of Vaidabhriti
32.	Son of Vaidabhriti	Son of Karshakeyi

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33.	Son of Karshakeyi	Son of Prachinayogi
34.	Son of Prachinayogi	Son of Sanjivi
35.	Son of Sanjivi	Son of Prashni
36.	Son of Prashni	Asurayana
37.	Asurayana	Asuri
38.	Asuri	Yajnavalkya
39.	Yajnavalkya	Uddalaka
40.	Uddalaka	Aruna
41.	Aruna	Upaveshi
42.	Upaveshi	Kushri
43.	Kushri	Vajashrava
44.	Vajashrava	Jihvavan Vadhyoga
45.	Jihvavan Vadhyoga	Asita Varshagana
46.	Asita Varshagana	Harita Kashyapa
47.	Harita Kashyapa	Shilpa Kashyapa
48.	Shilpa Kashyapa	Nidhruva Kashyapa
49.	Nidhruva Kashyapa	Vak
50.	Vak	Ambhini
51.	Ambhini	Aditya

You will have noticed that there is more than one sage with the same description.

The text next states that Yajnavalkya learnt the *Shukla Yajur Veda* from Aditya. This constituted the Vajasaneyi school of the *Yajur Veda*. This knowledge was obtained by the son of Sanjivi from Mandukayani, by Mandukayani from Mandavya, by Mandavya from Koutsa, by Koutsa from Mahitthi,

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by Mahitthi from Vamakakshayana, by Vamakakshayana from Shandilya, by Shandilya from Vatsya, by Vatsya from Kushri, by Kushri from Yajnavacha Rajastanvayana, by Yajnavacha Rajastanvayana from Tura Kavasheya, by Tura Kavasheya from Prajapati and by Prajapati from the *brahman*.

The *brahman* creates himself. We salute the *brahman*.

Thus ends the *khila kanda*. And this is also the end of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

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Glossary

adhyaya	chapter
advaita	where the *atman* and the *brahman* are regarded as one
anushtupa	a metre
anuvaka	lesson
apana	part of breath of life
ashrama	hermitage, also stage of life
ashvamedha	horse sacrifice
asura	demon
atman	human soul
ayana	path, period of six months
bhuloka	earth
bhuvarloka	the atmosphere
brahmaloka	place where the *brahman* dwells
brahman	the divine essence
brahmana	commentary on a *Veda*, also the priestly class
brahmavidya	knowledge of the *brahman*
dvaita	where the *atman* and the *brahman* are regarded as two
dyuloka	heaven
gandharva	a semi-divine species
gayatri	a *mantra*, a metre

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guru	teacher, preceptor
hiranyagarbha	the creator
kanda	branch, section
karma	action
khanda	part
krishnapaksha	fortnight during which the moon wanes
kshatriya	the warrior class
loka	region
lokapala	lord of a region
madhu	mead, nectar, honey
mantra	incantation
maya	illusion
nadi	vein, artery
nirguna	without qualities
oum	sacred word, identical with the *brahman*
papa	evil deed
para	knowledge of the *brahman*
paramatman	divine soul, identical with the *brahman*
pati	lord
praja	subject
prajapati	lord of the universe
prana	breath of life
pranava	sacred *mantra, oum*
prashna	question

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punya	store of merit, good deeds
purusha	supreme spirit
saguna	with qualities
samana	part of the breath of life
samhita	compilation of *mantras*
savana	part of the sacrificial day
savitri	a *mantra*
shanti patha	hymn for peace
shloka	verse
shuklapaksha	lunar fortnight during which the moon waxes
soma	herb, juice of that herb
sushumna	vein
sushupti	state of deep slumber
udana	part of breath of life
udgitha	hymn
uttarayana	six months during which the sun travels north
Upanishad	sacred text
varna	colour, caste
Veda	sacred text
vrihati	metre
vyana	part of breath of life
yaksha	semi-divine species
yoga	meditation that seeks to bring about union between the *atman* and the *brahman*

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